



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Kevin Murphy

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Second Session

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 8, 2015

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House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, TUESDAY, DECEMBER 8, 2015

Sixty-second General Assembly

Second Session

1:00 P.M.

SPEAKER

Hon. Kevin Murphy

DEPUTY SPEAKER

Ms. Margaret Miller

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. Before we begin the daily routine, I would like to deal with two outstanding points of order raised by the honourable Acting Leader of the New Democratic Party late last week.

SPEAKER'S RULING:

Complaint that the Com. Serv. Min. had stated that the Dart. South MLA had perhaps deliberately misled the House
(Pt. of order by Hon. M. MacDonald [Hansard p.6548, Dec. 2/15])
Not a point of order.

Upon review, the minister did not use the word "deliberately" so there is not a point of order.

On Wednesday of last week, the member complained that the Minister of Community Services had stated that the member for Dartmouth South had perhaps deliberately misled the House. I have reviewed Hansard and the sentence in question reads: "I've offered that help and it's misleading to say this government cut that subsidy." I note the minister did not use the word "deliberately," as suggested, and find that therefore there is no point of order.

SPEAKER'S RULING:

Acting Leader of the NDP complained that during Question Period she had heard someone from the government side yell out, "Get a hearing aid."
Pt. of order by Hon. M. MacDonald (Hansard p.6708, Dec. 4/15])
The remark was unparliamentary

A review of the audio recording discloses that a male voice did make that particular remark. It was unparliamentary, but not knowing who it was, all members are cautioned not to make such utterances.

On Friday last week, the honourable Acting Leader of the New Democratic Party also complained that during Question Period she had heard someone from the government side yell out "Get a hearing aid." She was supported in this by the honourable member for Kings North. I did not hear the comment but a review of the audio recording discloses that a male voice did make that particular remark. I find it was unparliamentary, but not knowing who it was, I will caution all members not to make such unparliamentary utterances in this Chamber.

MR. SPEAKER: We'll now begin the daily routine.

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

MR. TERRY FARRELL: Mr. Speaker. Today I beg leave to table a petition on behalf of the honourable Minister of Natural Resources, the member for Guysborough-Eastern Shore-Tracadie. The petition has the operative clause:

We, the undersigned persons . . . respectfully request that repairs and improvements to Highway 316 be undertaken as soon as possible before injuries, deaths, or disasters occur.

I am advised that this petition bears 1,800 signatures and I have affixed my signature thereto.

MR. SPEAKER: The petition is tabled.

PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Energy.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Minister of Justice, as Chairman of the Committee on Law Amendments, I am directed to report that the committee has met and considered the following bills:

Bill No. 138 - Chartered Professional Accountants Act.

Bill No. 139 - Municipal Elections Act.

Bill No. 140 - Public Accountants Act.

and the committee recommends these bills to the favourable consideration of the House, each without amendment.

Mr. Speaker, again, on behalf of the Minister of Justice, as Chairman of the Committee on Law Amendments, I am directed to report that the committee has met and considered the following bills:

Bill No. 110 - Marine Renewable-energy Act.

Bill No. 141 - Electricity Plan Implementation (2015) Act.

Bill No. 143 - Regulatory Accountability and Reporting Act.

and the committee recommends these bills to the favourable consideration of this House, with certain amendments.

MR. SPEAKER: Ordered that these bills be referred to the Committee of the Whole on Bills.

TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise in my place today and present to the House the Involuntary Psychiatric Treatment Act, the annual report.

MR. SPEAKER: The report is tabled.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Premier.

RESOLUTION NO. 2665

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL (The Premier): Mr. Speaker, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas the first Atlantic Canadian in nearly 100 years has been elected Speaker of the House of Commons; and

Whereas Geoff Regan, long-serving MP for Halifax West, was chosen for the role by his peers in Canada's Parliament on Thursday, December 3rd; and

Whereas Geoff has been a fair, dedicated, passionate Member of Parliament and will undoubtedly carry these admirable traits with him to the Speaker's Chair in Ottawa;

Therefore be it resolved that members of this House of Assembly congratulate Geoff on his election as Speaker of the House of Commons, and wish him all the best in his new role.

Mr. Speaker, I request waiver of notice and passage without debate.

MR. SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

RESOLUTION NO. 2666

HON. KAREN CASEY: Mr. Speaker, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas coding is important to the successful development of students and their critical thinking, problem solving, and creative skills, and it has been identified as a priority for all classrooms under Nova Scotia's Action Plan for Education; and

Whereas tens of thousands of Nova Scotia's students, from Primary to Grade 12 at more than 350 schools, are participating this week in the Hour of Code, a global learning

event that introduces them to the basics of coding, technology and design, and opens their minds to a world of career options; and

Whereas the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development is partnering with organizations like Skills Canada - Nova Scotia, and Brilliant Labs, to promote technology use and innovation through the delivery of exciting learning opportunities like Digital Skills Quest and the Superpower Challenge;

Therefore be it resolved that members of this Legislature recognize the importance of promoting and supporting the learning of code in our schools through the implementation of Nova Scotia's Action Plan for Education and events like the Hour of Code to ensure students' success.

Mr. Speaker, I request waiver of notice and passage without debate.

MR. SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, may I make an introduction?

MR. SPEAKER: Permission granted.

MR. GLAVINE: In the gallery today, we have Dr. William Webster, Dean of the Faculty of Health Professions at Dalhousie University, and his wife, Anne Godden-Webster. If they could rise and receive the warm welcome of the House. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

RESOLUTION NO. 2667

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas Nova Scotians receive the best care from teams of health care professionals working together; and

Whereas this approach allows physiotherapists, pharmacists, nurses, social workers, doctors, and others to contribute their expertise in a way that will improve patients' overall health; and

Whereas on Tuesday, December 1st, Dalhousie University officially opened the Collaborative Health Education Building, where students from all disciplines related to health will study and learn together the way they will practise in the future;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House congratulate Dalhousie University and Dr. William Webster for his leadership on the opening of the Collaborative Health Education Building, and wish its students the best of success as they learn a new and improved way of practice.

Mr. Speaker, I request waiver of notice and passage without debate.

MR. SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 146 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 231 of the Revised Statutes of 1989. The Insurance Act. (Hon. Sterling Belliveau)

MR. SPEAKER: Ordered that this bill be read a second time on a future day.

NOTICES OF MOTION

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Argyle-Barrington.

D'ENTREMONT, EDYN/ADAMS, EMILY: CONCOURS DE CHANT ANNUAL STAR ACADIE - FÉLICITATIONS

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Le 19 juillet 2015, la cinquième édition du concours de chant annuel Star Acadie a eu lieu au Centre communautaire de Par-en-Bas à Tusket par année pour la festival acadien international de Par-en-Bas.

Il y avait 18 participants, 11 étaient âgés de 10 à 14 ans dans la première catégorie, et sept étaient âgés de 15 à 19 ans dans la deuxième catégorie. Des prix en argent sont remis. Edyn d'Entremont, âgé de 11 ans était la gagnante dans la première catégorie. Emily Adams, âgée de 15 ans était la gagnante dans le deuxième. Les deux ont remporté chacun 500 \$.

Ces événements ont été présentés tous en français, qui aide la promotion de la musique française à travers de notre communauté acadienne. Je présente mes plus sincères félicitations à tous les participants.

Mr. Speaker, congratulations go to 11-year-old Edyn d'Entremont, winner of the first category, and 15-year-old Emily Adams, winner of the second category. This event was presented all in French, which helps promote French music through the Acadian community. I offer my congratulations to all the participants.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sackville-Cobequid.

HAPPY HANUKKAH: JEWISH NOVA SCOTIANS - WISH

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, Sunday, December 6th marked the beginning of Hanukkah, the Jewish Festival of Lights. Jewish families in Nova Scotia and across Canada gather over Hanukkah to light the menorah and celebrate with their loved ones.

The eight-day festival of lights is a perfect time for loved ones to come together to celebrate the small and big miracles of daily life, and remember that hope, faith, and determination are powerful forces that can help us overcome many obstacles. Hanukkah also reminds us all that we should remember those who are facing oppression and tyranny around the world and wish them perseverance, hope, light and freedom.

Mr. Speaker, I along with my caucus would like to wish all Jewish Nova Scotians a Happy Hanukkah.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Chebucto.

FRY, COACH DAVID: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

MR. JOACHIM STROINK: David Fry, though being an Acadian grad, spent the bulk of his amazingly successful coaching career at Dalhousie, where he led his men's and women's teams to a combined total of 30 conference championships. He was Dalhousie Coach of the Year four times; the AUS Swimming Coach of the Year 20 times, 10 each for men and women; and was twice CIS Coach of the Year for women's swimming in 2003 and men's in 2007.

When Fry retired as head coach at Dalhousie in 2012 at the age of 60, he had been involved with Dal's swimming program for 30 years, including 16 as head coach and had coached swimming for 40 years in all. He was instrumental in developing a tradition of excellence at Dalhousie that is likely to continue for years to come.

The swimming community in Nova Scotia and beyond is mourning the loss of the legacy of Coach David Fry, who lost his battle with cancer on October 22nd at the age of 63. He was a very passionate and caring man and an amazing coach who helped develop dozens of swimmers over the course of his career. He led by example and always included his assistant coaches with their feedback. I salute the memory of David Fry, Mr. Speaker - an outstanding champion of both athletics and community. He will be greatly missed.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

**NEW MINAS BAPTIST CHURCH:
BETHLEHEM RE-CREATION - FUNDRAISING**

MR. JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, I wish to express my congratulations to New Minas Baptist Church on their creativity and enterprise in creating this year's drive-through living nativity. Sunday night, December 6th, and Monday, December 7th, saw some 700 cars drive through the set of Bethlehem in the church parking lot. The town was recreated with everything from actual live animals to a blacksmith shop. The inn had "No Vacancy" and there was even a newborn babe in the manger. The shepherds were searching for their sheep and the Roman soldiers were collecting tax.

The first night saw 500 lbs of food and over \$1,000 raised for the food bank and for refugees. Well done, New Minas Baptist Church, on such a creative and entertaining display.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Queens-Shelburne.

LONG-TERM CARE FACILITIES: LIB. GOV'T. - FUNDING CUTS

HON. STERLING BELLIVEAU: Mr. Speaker, in the Spring's budget the Liberal Government cut \$3.6 million from the operating budget of long-term care facilities. As I drive home to Shelburne County, Mr. Speaker, I pass by the road to Lunenburg where Harbour View Haven had their budget cut by nearly \$75,000. I drive through Bridgewater, where the Hillside Pines was cut by nearly \$30,000. I stop in Liverpool, where Queens Manor was cut by over \$36,000 and then into Shelburne, the home of Roseway Manor, which saw their operation budget cut by over \$39,000. Our seniors who call these long-term facilities home deserve better.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Armdale.

MT. OLIVET CEMETERY - HISTORIC PRESERVATION

HON. LENA DIAB: I rise today to talk about Mount Olivet Cemetery in Halifax Armdale, an important historic landmark for its connection to the Titanic tragedy. On July 16, 2015, I met at the cemetery with Deanna Ryan-Meister, president, and other board members of the Titanic Society of Atlantic Canada.

There are 19 Titanic victims buried in the cemetery, including the ship's pastry chef, three waiters, a bass violinist, firemen, eight third-class passengers, one first-class passenger and four unknown victims. Three or four of those victims of that fateful sinking are of Lebanese descent and are buried among the 19 graves in Olivet Cemetery. We discussed the importance of maintaining and properly caring for the site to ensure we remember the victims and preserve an important part of our local history.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

DOYLE, ANDREW: TALENT - ACKNOWLEDGE

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to thank Andrew Doyle for thirty years of making music in Cape Breton. Andrew makes a living doing something he really loves, singing and entertaining with more than 200 shows a year. He has released two albums and is working on his third. The Andrew Doyle Band is one of the best in Cape Breton. It's a true honour to have this opportunity to acknowledge such a talented Cape Bretoner, who has entertained thousand during his career.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island.

MURPHY, TREVOR - N.S. MUSIC WK. PROG. OF YR.

HON. LABI KOUSOULIS: Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate local radio personality Trevor Murphy on his third consecutive win at Nova Scotia Music Week. Trevor is the long-time host of Halifax is Burning for Dalhousie University's Campus Radio 88.1 FM. It's Trevor's own show, centred on local music and talent. It was honoured with the Program of the Year Award at the Nova Scotia Music Week.

Halifax is Burning is a beloved show amongst our city's music scene, largely in part because of Trevor's undeniable passion for local arts, up and comers, and the bands and artists which he frequently showcases on the program.

Along with Trevor's award for Program of the Year, Dal's campus radio, CKDU, also won Station of the Year. I want to commend Trevor Murphy and CKDU for their invaluable contribution to Halifax's musical talent and community radio in general.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

**PAUL, ANDREA - PICTOU LANDING FIRST NATION:
CHIEF - ELECTION**

MS. KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise today to congratulate Andrea Paul for being re-elected for a third time as Chief in the recent Pictou Landing First Nation election.

Chief Paul has a keen interest in serving her community. Prior to being elected Chief, she served as a councillor for two terms. Chief Paul is also an educator and is the First Nations representative on the Chignecto Central Regional School Board. Councillors Dominic Denny, Derek Francis, and Gordie Prosper were re-elected. Newly-elected councillors are Marshal Phillips, Haley Bernard, and Barry Francis.

Voter turnout in Pictou Landing First Nation was 71 per cent, with 285 people casting ballots. Mr. Speaker, I congratulate Chief Paul and the councillors. I wish them well as they begin a new two-year term serving their constituents.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

PAUL, COLIN: FILM IND. - JOBS

MS. MARIAN MANCINI: Mr. Speaker, I would like to tell you the story of Colin Paul. Colin and his family came to Nova Scotia on vacation in 1999. He received a call to work on a small feature film, *Deeply*, to be shot on Ironbound Island by native Nova Scotian writer-director Sheri Elwood. At the end of that shoot, his wife returned to Toronto with their two young children to pack up and sell their old home and Paul stayed at their new home at the Head of St. Margarets Bay. It was a good news story.

For 16 years, with a strong, competitive Film Tax Credit in place, Paul was able to earn a good income, until the government eliminated the credit this Spring. Now Colin Paul travels out west for work, like so many others.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg West.

MOSLEY, REV. RON, SCHOLARSHIP - CONGRATS.

HON. MARK FUREY: Mr. Speaker, there are few of us who can say we've had the life experience that Ron Mosley can claim to have had. In his 95 years Reverend Ron Mosley has met some of history's most influential people, such as Martin Luther King, Jr.; served in World War II; and attended both Harvard and Oxford Universities.

Reverend Mosley came to live in Nova Scotia in the early 1970s, and has become an important part of our community. As an author, war veteran, and reverend, he has dedicated much of his time to the Local Branch No. 24 Bridgewater Legion. It seems fitting

that with such a full life story, a scholarship - The Chronicle Herald Ron Mosley Scholarship - be named in his honour.

Congratulations, Reverend Mosley, on the new scholarship, and thank you for your service and dedication to our community. I am so pleased to be able to stand here today and honour you in this way.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sydney River-Mira-Louisbourg.

**CARD, CHERYL & GORDON/BOSTON PIZZA
- PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES EMPLOYER PARTNERSHIP AWARD**

HON. ALFIE MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Cheryl and Gordon Card, owners of Boston Pizza in Sydney. Cheryl and Gordon were awarded the Persons with Disabilities Employer Partnership Award.

Boston Pizza was nominated by EmployAbility Partnership. The award was presented by His Honour the Lieutenant Governor on December 1st. The Persons with Disabilities Employer Partnership Award is given for employee inclusive hiring practices and procedures for all Nova Scotians.

It gives me great pleasure to thank Cheryl and Gordon of Boston Pizza for their dedication in running a successful, inclusive business in Sydney.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Chester-St. Margaret's.

HEALTH & WELLNESS - SENIORS: HOME REPAIRS - ASSISTANCE

HON. DENISE PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, Nova Scotians are wondering what the Minister of Health and Wellness means when he says seniors should be able to stay in their homes longer. Alan Coolen and Elaine Hatt are two of many seniors in Nova Scotia who desperately want to stay and live safely in their homes. However, both Alan and Elaine are living in fear of becoming homeless, as their homes require emergency repairs, but they are being forced to wait a year or more for a grant through Housing Nova Scotia.

We learned last week these wait times are the direct result of the Minister of Community Services' underspending her allocated housing repair funding for two years in a row. What is worse, we know she's only doing this to artificially make her budget look good. This is just not right.

It is time for the Minister of Health and Wellness and the Minister of Community Services to put aside their own political agendas and do what's fair for seniors in our province.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Fairview-Clayton Park.

LENNON, JOHN - REMEMBER

MS. PATRICIA ARAB: Mr. Speaker, on December 8, 1980, the world lost a melodic voice of peace and a strong voice of a generation, when John Lennon was murdered in front of his New York City apartment building. Lennon was a founding member of the most famous band in history, the Beatles, and used his fame to try to make our world a better place.

His talent as a singer and songwriter is unsurpassed and his words still inspire those who hear them. I ask that the members of this House take a moment to remember Mr. Lennon and honour his memory by carrying his message of goodwill and peace with them.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

SUTHERLAND, AL & MARY - COMMUN. CONTRIBUTION

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, how employees engage customers can make a major difference in a business. Al and Mary Sutherland, owners of Big Al's Convenience Store in New Glasgow, have been recognized on numerous occasions for their customer care excellence. Customers are always treated with respect and feel welcome when they drop by their store.

Big Al is a born entrepreneur and his patient, pleasant and humourous personality has made his business a great success. The store offers a wide array of products and services and the staff is always friendly and connected with their customers.

The location of this business is ideal, while other customers are known to travel out of their way to purchase products at Big Al's. We salute Al and Mary for their friendliness, commitment to excellence and generosity to our community.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sackville-Cobequid.

LONG-TERM CARE FACILITIES - BUDGET CUTS (KINGS CO.)

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, in the Spring budget, the Liberal Government cut \$3.6 million from the operating budget of long-term care facilities. Now we have a memo that shows just how much each nursing home has been cut.

Let's look at some of the cuts in Kings County: the operating budget for Evergreen Home for Special Care in Kentville was cut by over \$143,000; Wolfville Nursing Home was cut by nearly \$74,000; Grand View Manor in Berwick was cut by \$85,000.

Thousands of seniors live in long-term care facilities calling it home, yet the Liberal Government had cut the operating budget of 63 out of the 87 nursing homes in our province.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Colchester North.

JEWKES, REG - FRANK BALDWIN AWARD

HON. KAREN CASEY: Mr. Speaker, when Reg Jewkes from Colchester North began his teaching career in Truro, he heard that there was a shortage of game officials for basketball so he volunteered to help out. His volunteer effort led to a passion that he has pursued and enjoyed all of his life by becoming a high school, university, and professional basketball referee for five decades. He has gone on to work with young officials as an evaluator and says he find this work very special, enjoyable, and rewarding.

In November 2015, Reg Jewkes was presented with the Frank Baldwin Award for lifelong service to the game of basketball in the Province of Nova Scotia. Congratulations to Reg Jewkes for receiving this very prestigious and well-deserved award.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

BABINEAU, HELEN: GRADE 12 DIPLOMA - CONGRATS.

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, Helen Babineau received her Grade 12 diploma in June 2015 through the Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning. Babineau left school at 16, but was determined to complete her high school education. She is a 45-year-old mother of three from Cheticamp and she received her diploma just a few months before her daughter graduated from college.

Like many adult learners, Babineau had her share of challenges to overcome. While studying, she was busy working and raising a family. May we in this Legislature congratulate Helen for her achievement.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Truro-Bible Hill-Millbrook-Salmon River.

TRURO KINDNESS METERS

MS. LENORE ZANN: Mr. Speaker, there are three new meters collecting change in Truro these days. They aren't your typical parking meters, though, these new ones are kindness meters.

People walking by can donate spare change and the proceeds will go to local charities and community organizations. It is a simple way for people to make a difference: a quarter or a loonie at a time, for those in need in our community.

I would like to congratulate the Town of Truro, the Downtown Truro Partnership and the Bible Hill Kinsmen, who have all partnered on this unique, charitable initiative. I encourage everyone to visit Truro and Bible Hill areas and when you do, I hope that you visit one of our new kindness meters.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island.

NDP BUDGET (2012) - INCOME ASSISTANCE CUTS

HON. LABI KOUSOULIS: Mr. Speaker, in 2012, the NDP tabled the budget with a \$16.8 million surplus. The last budget cut they made was a \$17 million cut to income assistance. Income assistance in that year was only 11 payments, not 12. How did they do that? They pushed the payment ahead from the end of the month to the beginning of the following month, which meant every person on income assistance would miss their rent.

Mr. Speaker, will the former Minister of DCS and the former Minister of Finance now admit it was to make their budget look better?

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

GRAHAM, SAM - SONG "CAN I COME HOME FOR CHRISTMAS"

MR. TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to share a bit of information about my friend Sam Graham. By day Sam is the Westville Public Works Superintendent, by night he's a singer/songwriter. With thoughts of Syrian refugees on the mind, Sam was inspired to write a song. (Interruptions) Written from the perspective of a family man . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. The honourable member for Pictou East has the floor.

Please start over.

MR. HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to share a bit of information about my friend Sam Graham. By day Sam is the Westville Public Works Superintendent, by night he is a singer/songwriter. With thoughts of the Syrian refugees on the mind, Sam was inspired to write a song. Written from the perspective of a man living in a refugee camp, longing for a safe place to call home, Sam wrote Can I Come Home for Christmas and the song became a reality in just 20 minutes.

Sam gives freely of his time and talents and he will perform this song and many others during the Christmas season at a variety of concerts and events. This song is sure to encourage people of faith to embrace the Syrian refugees and, surely, even Scrooge will heed this powerful message.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Queens-Shelburne.

TIR - P3 COSTS

HON. STERLING BELLIVEAU: Mr. Speaker, this government continues to demonstrate . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. The honourable member for Queens-Shelburne has the floor.

MR. BELLIVEAU: Mr. Speaker, this government continues to demonstrate that it will not let facts get in the way when making policy decisions. This is highly evident at the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal. With respect to the Cobequid Pass highway project, we have recently learned that the developer paid \$56 million up front and has since received over \$300 million in tolls - over \$300 million in tolls. This is revenue that has left our province.

Meanwhile, the project's interest rate doubled as a result of the province taking the P3 route. Despite these facts, the department is currently spending another \$1 million to look into creating more P3 toll highways. This government is lost - it is going down the wrong road and must be stopped.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Timberlea-Prospect.

BLT SEN. ELEM. SCH. - INDIGO LOVE OF READING FDN.

MR. IAIN RANKIN: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the Beechville-Lakeside-Timberlea community on their successful campaign to add to the selection in the school library. The larger community rallied to support Beechville-Lakeside-Timberlea Senior Elementary School library in the Indigo Love of Reading Foundation Adopt a School campaign.

For three weeks every Fall, the program unites Indigo employees, customers, and the communities to raise money to rejuvenate elementary school libraries across Canada. Since 2009 this program has put more than 250,000 books into the hands of children at 1,600 schools. This year a group of volunteers encouraged everyone to vote online daily, resulting in BLT Senior Elementary placing third in the province, securing \$5,000 towards new books. Individuals also made generous donations to cover the cost of the additional books for the school, which accumulated to over \$14,000 worth of new books.

I would like the members of this Nova Scotia House of Assembly to join me in recognizing the effort and commitment of all involved, and congratulate the school in having such tremendous support from the community.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

LANDRY, CHRIS - RETIREMENT

MS. KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to congratulate Mrs. Chris Landry on her recent retirement. She has helped shape young lives for over three decades from her home in Pictou.

More than 90 children from Pictou West have been cared for by Chris. She has watched children from the young age of three weeks through elementary school age. Although technically a babysitter, Chris was more a surrogate grandparent who provided children with a home away from home. After 36 years, Chris isn't retiring from babysitting completely - she plans to continue caring for her own grandchildren.

Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to congratulate Chris on her retirement, and thank her for her compassionate and dedicated care of so many young lives.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Truro-Bible Hill-Millbrook-Salmon River.

LIB. GOV'T. - FUNDING/LEGISLATION

MS. LENORE ZANN: Mr. Speaker, last session, we saw the Liberal Government cut funding arbitrarily from dozens of local organizations like Hope Blooms, People First, and the Schizophrenia Society. They cut funding for consumer-led initiatives for people seeking mental health support. This summer, we learned they also cut funding for psychology interns, specialists that we are already lacking in the province, which forced the Nova Scotia Health Authority to pick up the tab for this important program.

Mr. Speaker, these cuts were done with little or no consultation or genuine engagement with the people that they impacted. Sadly, that trend has continued this season. Most government bills have been widely criticized by academic experts, community leaders, and business owners who, only now that bills are before the House, have a chance to actually provide their insight and feedback, most of which this majority Liberal Government has sadly ignored.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

PHOENIX HOUSE - ANNIV. (25th)

MR. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Mr. Speaker, I want to take a moment to recognize a very special occasion and a personal one for me.

Today, Phoenix House celebrated their 25th Anniversary. What started as a one-building, 12-room house on Hunter Street has flourished into a multi-service youth organization. Thousands of youth were given a new beginning and hope because of the selflessness of the many staff members and donors.

Mr. Speaker, Phoenix House is not just an organization but a family. I'd like to recognize some of the Phoenix family past and present: Tim Crooks, Rob Morris, Darren Howie, Darren O'Hanley, Jeannette Carley, Marion Brown, Michael Skinner, and of course, one of the hardest-working child advocates and all-around amazing human being Linda Wilson. To all of you, and everyone else I missed, thank you from the Phoenix youth.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sydney River-Mira-Louisbourg.

MILBURN, MICHELLE & DOUG/ADVANCED GLAZINGS - CONGRATS.

HON. ALFIE MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to mention a local business, Advanced Glazings in Sydney River. Although most of their customers are in the U.S., they are now expanding into Europe and other countries around the world. Advanced Glazings has grown more than 100 per cent over the last year. General manager Michelle Milburn is looking forward to their future expansions.

Currently, they have 24 employees in Sydney River and five sales representatives in the U.S. The company's success in product development and in sales, especially outside Nova Scotia, has resulted in numerous industry and trade show awards over the years.

I would like to congratulate and thank Michelle Milburn, general manager, and her husband, Doug Milburn, the product inventor and company founder, as they continue to grow and thrive here in Cape Breton.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

CHILDREN'S MEM. DRAGONFLY PARK COMM. - WORK RECOGNIZE

MS. MARIAN MANCINI: Mr. Speaker, I'm sure all members of this House can agree that the loss of a child is a tremendous pain no parent should have to endure. Unfortunately, it is something far too many have experienced.

It is for this reason the Children's Memorial Dragonfly Park Committee was formed by a group of mothers in Dartmouth to establish a memorial garden as a place for solemn

reflection and celebration of the memory of those who were taken away from us far too early. In October 2015, after years of advocacy and with the support of private donors and funds from HRM, a portion of the park around Sullivan's Pond in Dartmouth South was officially and permanently dedicated as that place.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize the work of these mothers in keeping the memories of those lost to us alive, and encourage all members to keep them in their thoughts this holiday season.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants East.

BINGHAM EVERSON, KELLY & DANNY - MAITLAND MINUTE

MS. MARGARET MILLER: Kelly and Danny Bingham Everson are the driving forces behind the Maitland Minute. These are short Internet films that highlight the Maitland area and introduce the people who make this community special.

They have interviewed new residents of Maitland and descendants of some of the original families. They have looked at unique local businesses and groups that promote the arts. They combine their talents and produce short videos that are meant to pique interest in the area in just a short Maitland Minute. The goal is to leave the viewer interested enough to make a trip to the community and do their own exploring.

Kelly and Danny have also produced a map of the Maitland area that highlights businesses and places of interest. These maps are available locally and at the tourist information centre. This dynamic duo owns Bing's Eatery and the Tidal Life Guesthouse. They are committed to life in the community of Maitland.

Mr. Speaker, in a time when rural communities struggle, it's folks like Kelly and Danny who set the tone for this province, thinking of innovative, new ways to promote their community.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

FOSTER, THOMAS - BOXING ACHIEVEMENTS

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Sydney Mines boxer Thomas Foster who, with the training and guidance of the Tri-Town Boxing Club, won a provincial title, fought at the Canadian Golden Gloves Championship and Nationals, and has appeared in 21 bouts. He is becoming a rising star in the sport of boxing at the age of 16 years.

It is a true honour to have this opportunity to recognize the talent and success of Thomas Foster, and we expect to hear a lot more from this young man.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Chester-St. Margaret's.

TIR - PEDESTRIAN FINES

HON. DENISE PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, under this Liberal Government not only is Nova Scotia one of the most expensive places to live in Canada, now it is the most expensive place in Canada to go for a walk if you are not careful.

Shared responsibility between pedestrians and motorists is important but a \$700 fine if you forget to hit the crosswalk button is extreme. Compare this \$700 fine to the following Nova Scotia fines: failing to obey terms and conditions of a burning permit is only \$237.50; driving with no rear licence plate is \$151.25; discharging a loaded firearm inside a park is only \$180.

Under this Liberal Government Nova Scotians have to think twice about going out for a walk over the holidays; make one small mistake and it could be a \$700 misstep.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg.

VEINOTTE, HEATHER D. - BOOK RELEASE

MS. SUZANNE LOHNES-CROFT: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize writer, director, and playwright Heather D. Veinotte of West Northfield. Ms. Veinotte recently released a new book, a paranormal fiction entitled *Lonely Angels*, a story about a psychic who partners with a local police force following a string of murders.

This is her third mystery novel since 2003. It took her nearly two-and-a-half years to complete *Lonely Angels*, and she has already begun work on the second book of what she plans to be a trilogy. The first book is set in the fictional community of Bridgeview, but the follow-up novel is scheduled to take place in Lunenburg and is expected to be completed by next November.

Mr. Speaker, I ask you to join me today in congratulating Ms. Veinotte for completing her most recent book, and for her passion in both reading and writing.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Argyle-Barrington.

PATCHWORK PALS - ANNIV. (15th)

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, the Patchwork Pals gather together weekly with a common goal: to quilt. The group began 15 years ago and have grown to over 40 members. They gather every Wednesday at the Club Acadien located in Ste. Anne du Ruisseau.

Their purpose is to make quilts to give to needy people, and to local non-profit organizations to assist them in their fundraising efforts. Mr. Speaker, 16 quilts have been donated this year alone.

On November 18th, an open house was held to celebrate their 15th Anniversary and present four of their quilts to the Friends of the Yarmouth Light, the Children's Wish Foundation, Argyle Municipality Historical & Genealogical Society, and the Quinan Seniors Club.

I offer them my congratulations on their 15th Anniversary and thank them for their generosity to those less fortunate, as well as the contributions to local communities.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Victoria-The Lakes.

**MEM. MARAUDERS: PANTHERS CLASSIC HOCKEY TOURNAMENT
- CONGRATS.**

MS. PAM EYKING: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the Memorial Marauders hockey team on winning the 19th annual Panthers Classic hockey tournament in Glace Bay this past weekend. The Marauders captured the eight-team tournament Sunday afternoon with a thrilling 2-to-1 overtime victory over the J.L. Ilsley Judges of Halifax.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to congratulate all the Marauders players and coaches on their fine performance this weekend, and wish them the best of luck for the rest of the season.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

MACLEAN, BILLY JOE: PUB. SERV. - CONTRIBUTIONS

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, Billy Joe MacLean made more noise than any MLA in the province. I remember reading that in an election campaign ad back in the 1980s, and he did. This man has contributed 48 years of his life to public service - 17 elections, an ability to win matched by few in any level of government in the world. He championed the Strait Area Education Recreation Centre, the Nautical Institute of the Port Hawkesbury Nova Scotia Community College, and the Port Hawkesbury Civic Centre.

He also championed people. To this day he does things behind the scenes that nobody knows about - acts of kindness for others.

Now, some might say that he can be contrary, but a fellow has to have some fire in him. The political arena needs people with courage and conviction, and Billy Joe has those qualities in spades.

May we remember Billy Joe as someone who had the people's support and who worked hard to deliver for his community, and may we thank his wife, Glenda, and his entire family for sharing him with us.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings South.

REDMOND, JAMES - ASSOC. OF N.S. VILLAGES LONG-SERV. AWARD

MR. KEITH IRVING: Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize the hard work and dedication of one of the longest-serving public servants in New Minas. Mr. James Redmond was recently recognized with a Long Service Award by the Association of Nova Scotia Villages for 20 years of service as an elected official in the Village of New Minas. Mr. Redmond has also served with the New Minas Volunteer Fire Department for 39 years and has been chief for the last 18 years.

The Village of New Minas incorporated in 1968. It is a thriving and vibrant community today, and Mr. Redmond's years of dedication have played no small part in the welfare and the prosperity of the village. On behalf of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly, I offer our thanks and congratulations to Mr. James Redmond for his years of service to his community.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

FRAZEE, CATHERINE - ORDER OF CANADA

MR. JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, Catherine Frazee of Canning became an Officer of the Order of Canada, the second-highest rank, on December 15, 2014. The Order of Canada is intended to recognize outstanding achievement, dedication to community, and service to the nation.

Frazee was recognized for her social justice advocacy and advancement of the rights of people with disabilities. Frazee, a former professor of Disability Studies at Ryerson University, retired to her former vacation home in the Canning area in 2010. She spent one semester as a guest lecturer of a human rights course at Dalhousie in 2001.

In a *Chronicle Herald* article, she stated, "Disabled people are still denied access to important opportunities in the realm of education, employment and social supports."

Congratulations to Catherine on this award and on a lifetime of improving the lives of the disabled.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sackville-Beaver Bank.

DOUCETTE, HOLLY - SWIMMING ACHIEVEMENTS

MR. STEPHEN GOUGH: Mr. Speaker, I stand in my place today to share a few words concerning Holly Doucette. Holly Doucette is a 17-year-old Beaver Bank resident who won a medal in swimming at the East Coast Championships in July. Holly was a representative of the Sackville Waves Aquatic Team, better known as SWAT. Holly is a hemiplegic, which means that she is partially paralyzed on the right side of her body; also, she is legally blind.

Doucette became involved in SWAT when she was learning to swim, when SWAT swimming coach Heidi Miller noticed her. Doucette was swimming within two weeks after being coached by Heidi.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the constituents of Sackville-Beaver Bank, I want to congratulate Holly Doucette on overcoming her disabilities and on expressing her talents in an extraordinary way.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants West.

GOV'T. (N.S.): AVONDALE SKY WINERY - INVESTMENT THANK

MR. CHUCK PORTER: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the wine industry of Nova Scotia. We were fortunate this morning to have the Premier in Hants West, specifically at Avondale Sky Winery, to make an announcement of a \$1 million investment into this industry.

When you come from parts of rural Nova Scotia, like I do, that is a very important announcement with regard to job growth - pardon the pun - and the future of the wine industry is only expanding. This is big business in this province, and I want to say, on behalf of the many people I have already heard from in the last three hours, Mr. Speaker, thanks very much to the government for that announcement, and to the wine industry a big congratulations. Let's grow forward.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

WESTVILLE - LIGHT UP THE NIGHT: KOC COUN. 1667 - CONGRATS.

MR. TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, the Knights of Columbus Council 1667 is lighting up the night in Acadia Park in Westville for the second consecutive year. The event was started three years ago by Glenn MacLeod and features ten murals created by local artists that capture scenes reflecting Christmases in Westville 100 years ago. It also features a nativity scene constructed by fellow Knight Alex MacInnis, Christmas trees, and lights. Mike MacIsaac heads the project, and with his team spent the weekend setting up the displays and trees that will be on display until January 6th.

Mr. Speaker, this event was kicked off by a Torch Light Parade, and this stellar exhibit is a family event that is becoming a tradition in Westville. I want to congratulate Mike and everyone involved.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cole Harbour-Eastern Passage.

QUIGLEY'S CORNER TREE LIGHTING - ANL. (26th)

MS. JOYCE TREEN: Mr. Speaker, on November 29th the communities of Eastern Passage, Shearwater, and Cow Bay came together to kick off the holiday season. The 26th Annual Quigley's Corner tree lighting took place in the heart of the community. The corner decorations were themed around the Peanuts and Snoopy's 50th Anniversary and in attendance was the Grinch, Snoopy, Santa and Charlie the Christmas tree.

The Eastern Passage Tim Hortons graciously donated all the hot chocolate and the 3rd Eastern Passage Scouts served it. Girl Guides handed out cookies to the crowd and there was corn chowder for everyone. The LED light exchange was there to take the old Christmas lights and hand out new LED lights. Holiday music was provided by the Iroquois Cadet Band and the Seaside Elementary Choir. This annual event is the perfect start to the Christmas season.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clayton Park West.

ARAB O'MALLEY, DR. JENINE: PROFESSION/COMMUN. - CONTRIBUTIONS

HON. DIANA WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, every year the Canadian Progress Club of Halifax Cornwallis recognizes women who have made important contributions to their respective professions and to their communities.

I am delighted to inform the House that my constituent, Dr. Jenine Arab O'Malley was one of those outstanding women honoured this year with the Progress Women of Excellence Award. She was honoured in the Health, Sport and Wellness category at a gala on November 18, 2015.

Dr. Arab O'Malley runs a successful dental practice in Clayton Park and is the first person in Atlantic Canada to achieve accreditation status in the American Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry. She volunteers with the Give Back a Smile program, which restores the smile of women who have survived domestic violence. She has also recently escorted Acadia University students to Honduras for a medical humanitarian project with Global Brigades.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating Dr. Arab O'Malley for her important contributions to her profession and community.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Waverley-Fall River-Beaver Bank.

WAVERLEY HERITAGE MUSEUM

MR. BILL HORNE: Located on Rocky Lake Drive, the Waverley Heritage Museum houses a very interesting collection featuring gold mining artifacts, the Acadian Powder Mill, school pictures, archival records, sports records, many antiques, and a blacksmith's tool display.

The Waverley Heritage Society has collected, recorded, and preserved many local artifacts and recorded chronicling the gold mining rush, which began in 1861 and continued until 1940.

In 1991, needing a new home, the museum bought the old St. John Anglican Church building, which was built in 1861. The church's sanctuary was converted into a museum, using the pews and the kneelers for tables, shelves and display cases.

If you are passing through Waverley, it is definitely worth taking the time to explore the interesting period of Nova Scotia history.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Armdale.

DIMAN ASSOC. (CAN.) - BEST WISHES

HON. LENA DIAB: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Diman Association Canada in celebrating the annual family Christmas dinner on Saturday, December 5, 2015.

I was delighted to attend this special dinner with my family, friends and colleague MLA for Fairview-Clayton Park. Along with great food, music and company, we also had the opportunity to view the video to commemorate the 20th Anniversary of the beautiful community centre located at 345 Kearney Lake Road. We also shared in purchasing 50-50 tickets with some exciting prizes, and donations went to Feed Nova Scotia to help a family in need to have a great Christmas.

On behalf of everyone, Mr. Speaker, I extend best wishes, a Happy Holiday and Merry Christmas to the Diman Association Canada's members.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Fairview-Clayton Park.

STARRATT, SANDRA - PROGRESS WOMEN OF EXCELLENCE AWARD

MS. PATRICIA ARAB: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and congratulate Sandra Starratt on her prestigious Progress Women of Excellence Award in Education and

Research. The Progress Women of Excellence Awards takes place each November and recognize 19 inspirational women who play an important role in our community.

Sandra is the French Department head at Halifax West High School, as well as Student Government Advisor. Sandra is an amazing role model to all, inside and outside of the classroom. She oversees 19 committees that fundraise between \$50,000 and \$100,000 annually for many great organizations.

Through this work she encourages kindness and giving in young leaders and this really showed in her role as co-chairman of the Canadian Student Leadership Conference in September. I had the wonderful privilege to work with Sandra during my time as guidance counsellor at Halifax West and, let me tell you, her hard work and drive is truly inspiring. I also have to say that, without giving too much away of her age, I was one of the young leaders that she did inspire in her first years at Halifax West, so I'm very thankful to her for that as well.

I ask this House of Assembly to join me in congratulating Sandra on her well-deserved award.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants East.

FORREST, MEGAN/CLOWE, AILYN - SOCCER ACHIEVEMENTS

MS. MARGARET MILLER: Mr. Speaker, in 2010, the East Hants Soccer Association, the Bedford Soccer Association, the Sackville United Soccer Association, and the Scotia Soccer Club united together and formed a new regional club called the Suburban Football Club. They felt that they needed to do this in order to put their best players forward and compete at the highest level of teams in the province.

The four clubs continue to operate individually and maintain their own identify for many recreational and Tier 2 levels of play. Two Enfield-based soccer players with Suburban FC competed at the Canada Games Soccer National Championships held October 7 - 12, 2015. Megan Forrest travelled to Surrey, B.C. for the Under 16 Girls Cup and Ailyn Clowe went to St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador, for the Under 14 Girls Cup.

I would like to congratulate both Megan Forrest and Ailyn Clowe on earning the right to represent Nova Scotia at the Canada Cup Soccer National Championships.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

HENDERSON, JOHN: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

MR. TERRY FARRELL: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to send out my condolences and sympathy to the family of the late John Henderson of Springhill. John was a former coal miner and chef, and the former Deputy Mayor of Springhill, whom I had the pleasure of working with when I was counsel for the Cumberland County Joint Services Management Authority.

John was an outspoken advocate for the town, someone who worked tirelessly on behalf of the former Town of Springhill and he will be sadly missed. I once again send out sympathy and condolences to the members of his family.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg.

MYRA, BROMLYN - VOL. EFFORTS

MS. SUZANNE LOHNES-CROFT: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize an extraordinary young woman. Bromlyn Myra of Lunenburg was recognized earlier this Fall by the Town Council for her efforts as a volunteer. For several years she has been a volunteer with the War Amps and for the last five years she has been a junior counsellor at the Atlantic Champs Seminars. Bromlyn was born without a left arm.

Lunenburg Mayor Rachel Bailey said it best, “She has been a role model for young amputees by offering her advice, sharing her experiences and amplifying a positive approach to challenges.”

Mr. Speaker, I ask that you join me in recognizing Bromlyn Myra as an extraordinary volunteer and young woman.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings South.

LONAR, JAKE: BASEBALL CAREER - ENCOURAGE

MR. KEITH IRVING: Mr. Speaker, I’m pleased to acknowledge in the House of Assembly today a talented, young, promising left-hand pitcher from Coldbrook. Mr. Jake Lonar, a 17-year-old student at Central Kings Rural High School, has been playing on provincial elite teams since the age of 13. His goal is to play in the big leagues and he has already been noticed by Baseball Canada and the Toronto BlueJays.

In 2013, at 15 years of age, he represented Nova Scotia at the Canada Games. These days he is kept busy considering offers from both Canadian and American universities. Mr. Lonar has acknowledged the local coaches whose mentoring has been instrumental in his early career - Mr. Ian Mosher, Corey Kent, and Kevin Daurie.

On behalf of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly I would like to congratulate and encourage Mr. Jake Lonar in his extremely promising baseball career.

MR. SPEAKER: Barring more Members' Statements, the House will now recess for a few seconds in advance of Question Period.

[1:59 p.m. The House recessed.]

[2:00 p.m. The House reconvened.]

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS TO MINISTERS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

HEALTH & WELLNESS - ABERDEEN HOSP. MENTAL HEALTH UNIT: ADMIN. UNITS - REPLACEMENT

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: My question is to the Premier. Mr. Speaker, last August, the government assured Nova Scotians that the closure of the mental health unit at the Aberdeen Hospital would only be temporary. Now as recently as today, they still won't say when it will reopen. We learned last week that administrative offices have been moved into the former rooms there. But we're also told that that is temporary.

I'd like to ask the Premier, will he confirm for the House today that administrative offices have been moved into the old mental health unit and that the move is not in fact temporary?

THE PREMIER: I want to thank the honourable member for the question. I'll ask the Minister of Health and Wellness to respond.

HON. LEO GLAVINE: What is taking place with the actual unit at the Aberdeen is that Public Health and their facilities had air quality issues and have moved over using just a small part of the space that has been the unit at the Aberdeen.

MR. BAILLIE: How symbolic of the way the government is managing our mental health services, when they tell the people of Pictou County that the closure there is only temporary, and now they're moving administrative offices into some of that space.

Mr. Speaker, this is no way to run our mental health system. They still have an outstanding promise from the government to reopen the short-stay unit. I'll ask the Minister of Health and Wellness directly: Will he tell the House now when that mental health unit will reopen?

MR. GLAVINE: What I can tell the Leader of the Official Opposition and all people in Pictou County is that there is an array of mental health services available both at the Aberdeen and in the mental health clinic in New Glasgow as well as other providers throughout the county. As far as the Aberdeen short-term psychiatric unit goes, getting that decision is still a work in progress.

MR. BAILLIE: That array of services does not include a short-stay facility in the mental health unit of the Aberdeen Hospital, a crucial in-patient facility for people in northern Nova Scotia who are in need of mental health services.

The minister himself assured the people of Pictou County that that unit would reopen, that it was a temporary closure. Now he says that it's under review and that it's not up to him; it's up to the health authority itself. I'll ask the minister a simple question, what has changed since he told the people of Pictou County he would make sure that the closure was only temporary?

MR. GLAVINE: What I can say again to the people of Pictou is that there are services that are in place. When they started a recruitment process, they ran into challenges around recruitment. We know that at some point we will make a firm decision on what future services will be offered at the Aberdeen.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Acting Leader of the New Democratic Party.

PREM. - TEACHERS UNION: CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS - UPDATE

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: My question is for the Premier. Last week, teachers across the province voted convincingly against this Liberal Government's most recent contract offer.

Mr. Speaker, it's clear that teachers weren't pleased with the ultimatum that had been handed to them by the Premier and his government. Teachers have made it clear that they want to participate in good-faith bargaining, and they want an opportunity, through collective bargaining, to improve classroom conditions for the benefit of both teachers and students.

It has been over a week since the teachers held their vote, so I want to ask the Premier if he can please provide the House with an update on where his government is in regard to contract negotiations.

THE PREMIER: I thank the honourable member for the question. I want to tell her and all members of this House and indeed all Nova Scotians that this government is committed to living within the fiscal framework.

Mr. Speaker, we put a fair wage offer on the table to teachers across this province at the same time as we were investing in classrooms. We capped class sizes from P to 3. We took 200 outcomes out of the curriculum to improve the environment in the classroom. The very day they voted no, we had teachers across the province representing Grades 4 to 6 doing the exact same things to reduce the pressure put on classrooms, outcomes that we believe are unnecessary.

We've invested in literacy tutors and math tutors. We brought back Reading Recovery, the very thing that government cut. We, like teachers, have invested in the classroom but, indeed, this province has tough financial challenges and everyone is going to have to participate in getting us back to fiscal health.

MS. MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, more and more weight is put on teachers each and every day in the classroom. Today the minister stood up and gave a message about coding now from P to 12, which is a great thing to happen, but more resources and more support for teachers need to happen. They can't keep having this stuff piled on. My question for the Premier is, when will his government ensure that the concerns of teachers are heard in terms of what's going in the classroom and the pressures they feel?

THE PREMIER: I want to thank the honourable member. I want to assure all teachers across this province that on October 8, 2013, their voices were heard. We made a commitment to public education when we came to government to reinvest the \$65 million that was cut by the former government by the very member who stood in this House. We have hired more teachers; we've capped class sizes from P to 3 and we will continue to do that throughout our public education system.

We have reduced the outcomes, the expectations that government and every government before them loaded on teachers. We've reduced those outcomes. We've refocused on literacy and numeracy and I am extremely proud that our government is introducing coding from P to 12 across the public education system because parents are asking for it and students deserve the very best.

MS. MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, as I said, we all agree that students will benefit from coding being taught in our schools but it is now another additional bunch of stuff being loaded onto teachers. My question for the Premier is, will the hard earned collective rights of teachers and civil servants be respected in the coming weeks by this government or will those rights be taken away through legislation?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for the question. Over the last number of months we've been negotiating with all public sector unions. We have clearly focused on establishing a wage pattern that reflects Nova Scotians ability to pay. We believe that we have a wage pattern that is not only fair to Nova Scotia taxpayers but fair to those public servants who are delivering services on behalf of us. Part of that was also looking at Long Service Awards.

I want to remind all members of this House, 70 per cent of the population of this province do not have a pension plan. Not only do we have one in the public sector but the Long Service Award is in addition to a pension plan. What we have asked is not remove anything from anyone that they've earned at the bargaining table. What we have said, very clearly and fairly, we cannot continue to allow it to grow at a rate that the 70 per cent of the population can't afford. Come to the table. We've treated them fairly. We have respected the things that they've already earned at the bargaining table and we'll continue to do so but let me be straight, we will live within the fiscal means of the province.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

**HEALTH & WELLNESS - ABERDEEN HOSP.:
MENTAL HEALTH UNIT - REOPENING**

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness. Clearly he is getting ready to tell us that he has no plan to reopen the mental health unit, the short-stay unit at the Aberdeen Hospital. He's trying to convince the people of Pictou County who rely on that service that they are better off without it. Well, no one is going to believe that when that day comes - they are worse off. Psychiatrists, mental health professionals, even the police who rely on that in-patient facility know they cannot do their jobs if there isn't a mental health unit at the Aberdeen Hospital.

I would like to ask the Minister of Health and Wellness to simply confirm the obvious, that he has no intention of reopening the mental health unit.

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, what I can tell the member opposite, the Leader of the Official Opposition, is that the entire team from the Nova Scotia Health Authority - under the leadership guidance of Dr. Courey and those who are underground in Pictou - are working as we speak to map out a plan to provide the very best of mental health services to the people of Pictou County.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, the very best mental health services include a short-stay facility at the Mental Health Unit at the Aberdeen Hospital for people with mental illness who need help in northern Nova Scotia. It is simply obvious to anyone who works in the system, or relies on it, that you cannot have better service without that facility in place. That's why it was the Minister of Health and Wellness who said it would only be a temporary closure; now he says that someone else is working on an alternative plan.

That is not right, Mr. Speaker. It is getting close to Christmas and the demands on our mental health delivery system are going up, not down. The Minister of Health and Wellness stands here now and is trying to point the finger at someone else, because he made a promise and he's not going to keep it. So why doesn't he just get it over with? Tell us right now - if he knows what's happening to that mental health unit, tell us now.

MR. GLAVINE: What I can tell the Leader of the Official Opposition and the people of Pictou County is that they have outstanding clinicians in Pictou County delivering mental health services 24/7/365, and the member opposite is completely wrong when he talks about Christmas coming and more use of mental health facilities. Actually, if you take a look at the review of statistics, there are less people in short-term and long-term mental health units during the Christmas period.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member for Queens-Shelburne.

TIR - PEDESTRIAN FINE: ORGANIZATIONS - CONSULTATION

HON. STERLING BELLIVEAU: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal.

Good consultation means good legislation. We are hearing from a number of community groups, including Walk'n'Roll, the Halifax Cycling Coalition, and the Ecology Action Centre, who are concerned with the minister's decision to dramatically increase various fines for pedestrians. Mr. Speaker, did the minister consult with these organizations about the \$697 fine to pedestrians who don't push a button when crossing the sidewalk?

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: I do genuinely thank the member for the question. This has been a very hot topic here in Halifax and across the province since Bill No. 133 was introduced. This really is about shared responsibility, Mr. Speaker, and when you look at the fine levels that we had, \$697.50 represented that highest infraction which is a category G. The reason why we did that - we did of course consult the RSAC, and we have a number of very experienced and dedicated road safety engineers who have been put on this.

We're just trying to do the right thing, Mr. Speaker. We've had 51 fatalities, 1,940 injuries since 2007 - there's a severe problem with pedestrian safety, with the decisions being made by drivers, pedestrians and all of us who share the road. This was not intended to target anyone, we just want to keep people safe. That was the point of this.

I'm listening to the conversations and I'm hearing the reactions, and I can tell you that there are very good arguments on both sides, Mr. Speaker. We'll always continue to listen, but at the end of the day we want to make sure people get home safely, whether they are drivers or pedestrians.

MR. BELLIVEAU: Mr. Speaker, safety is a shared responsibility and the NDP caucus is all about promoting safety, but the \$697 fine for pedestrians is just too high and unfair to low-income Nova Scotians. The Ecology Action Centre has questioned why this fine for not stopping for a school bus with flashing lights is less than the minister's \$697.50 fine for pedestrians.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister explain why this fine for a person who doesn't push a button when crossing a sidewalk is higher than a driver not stopping for a child getting off or on a school bus?

MR. MACLELLAN: The Motor Vehicle Act is a hundred years old. There are a lot of fines that were developed at an individual basis, Mr. Speaker. We have committed to looking at the collective use of fines and the levels that we have across all fines that we enact here and implement here in the province, and we are committed to doing that.

There are 18 active transportation groups out there that we will consult with in the new year to talk about some of the bigger issues that have come to light because of this conversation. But, Mr. Speaker, I said this respectfully - I don't believe that this is targeting or impacting low income Nova Scotians or AT users. This is about road safety.

We want to keep everyone safe, Mr. Speaker. We want drivers and pedestrians to obey the rules, make sure they get home safely. I'd love to be able to stand here in the House this time next year and say that no one paid \$697 and we all got home safely - no deaths, far fewer accidents. let's protect Nova Scotians.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

HEALTH & WELLNESS: SHORT-STAY UNIT - JOB POSTINGS

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness. The short-stay unit at the Aberdeen Hospital has been closed for more than four months. Apparently the issue of recruiting staff for the unit has been the chief reason for its closure. My question to the minister is, what is the status of the job postings and how many interested applicants have applied?

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, what I can tell the member opposite is first of all, the unit has been closed 130 days. There have been eight patients who required short-term care; most were able to get looked after in nearby Truro. In terms of the posting, those required positions are up on the website today.

MR. DUNN: Mr. Speaker, many people in Pictou County are worried about the future of this unit and have spoken out that it has saved their life or the life of a loved one. It is very important that it be reopened. The minister mentioned earlier the challenges while recruiting. My question to the minister is, what were the challenges that occurred during the recruitment process?

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, quite a number of the recent psychiatrists who come to the province come from the U.K. August, when recruitment started, is a more difficult time of the year, especially for those who have graduated and are looking at positions, so we've had that ongoing issue over the last number of months to get the right team in place.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

**HEALTH & WELLNESS - PICTOU CO. MENTAL HEALTH SERV.:
IMPROVEMENT - PLANS**

MR. TIM HOUSTON: My question is also for the Minister of Health and Wellness. Can the minister confirm whether his long-term plan for improved mental health services in Pictou County involves having patients assessed at the Aberdeen and then moved to another hospital for treatment, where that initial assessment deems admission is necessary?

HON. LEO GLAVINE: As the member for Pictou would know, sometimes when there are assessments, they will go on to the Abbie J. Lane or possibly to the provincial hospital in Dartmouth, the Purdy Building, and that's where they may be going for short or long-term treatment.

There is an array of services here in the province and we have now, under the one provincial health authority, we have access to all of the best clinicians at different places in the province.

MR. HOUSTON: Well, in the absence of a short-stay unit in Pictou County, anyone who is assessed as needing admission has to be moved elsewhere. Just yesterday I met with a family in just that situation; the psychiatrist in New Glasgow assessed this person as needing to be admitted, couldn't find a bed anywhere, had a bed in Truro, lost it - couldn't transfer there fast enough - and ended up with a bed in Sydney. Had a very harrowing journey to get to Sydney, only to arrive and find out that the psychiatrist in Sydney insisted on reassessing them and he assessed them differently than did the psychiatrist in Pictou County. No bed for that person - back to Pictou County.

Mr. Speaker, obviously that is not acceptable. If the minister's plan involves having people assessed as needing admission, being moved around, has the minister thought about the situation where a second psychiatrist in another location is going to reassess and is it fair to families to have those types of situations?

MR. GLAVINE: Thank you very much for the question. What I can say to the honourable member is that I just heard details of that circumstance he is describing as I was walking here today. That is an unfortunate situation for that family and for the person who needed treatment. In this particular case we are looking into why circumstances unfolded as they did and I am prepared to share that information with the member opposite.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sackville-Cobequid.

**HEALTH & WELLNESS - LONG-TERM CARE FACILITIES:
BUDGET CUTS - DETAILS**

HON. DAVID WILSON: Last week in Question Period the Minister of Health and Wellness indicated that a CEO of a long-term care facility in Pictou County told him that the Liberal Government could make further cuts to nursing homes and not impact care. I'll table that, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to ask the minister, how much is the minister prepared to cut in the budgets to long-term care facilities, which so many seniors across the province call home?

HON. LEO GLAVINE: I've been fortunate now to visit over half of the long-term care facilities in our province, and I see the great care that goes on.

What the member opposite missed was that there was nothing said about a cut, but some of the administrators are saying we can create greater efficiencies and keep the high quality of care in our long-term care facilities.

MR. DAVID WILSON: When government changes and inherits a deficit, they don't cut nursing home funding. The previous government inherited a \$700-million deficit, and we didn't cut the operating budgets of long-term care facilities - not 5 cents. The MacDonald and Hamm Governments didn't do it either, Mr. Speaker. No government - well, the Savage Government may have done that.

Nursing homes have advised us that they have been unable to replace equipment, and they've even started charging families for foot care. When will the minister tell us the true impact the cuts will have to nursing homes across the province?

MR. GLAVINE: I thank the member for the question. What we need to be reminded of is that it has now been just about nine months since the budget came down. What we didn't really make, if you wish, were any strong cuts, because we actually put \$6.9 million more into long-term care this fiscal year. What we didn't do was perhaps give the increase that normally had been given for inflation. The nursing homes that I have visited have made adjustments and are keeping up the same high-quality care that they provide.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

JUSTICE: PRISONER ESCAPES - INVESTIGATION

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Three years ago, myself and the member for Cape Breton-Richmond were on CTV/ATV news with Steve Murphy. We were interviewed - I'm sure people remember the infamous photo of the gentleman who was hanging off the back of the sheriff's transport vehicle. He had broken through the rear window and was about to jump off and leap to freedom, and he did.

Mr. Speaker, we have had another incident. On Friday last week, we had a prisoner escape custody in Truro. The prisoner was not handcuffed. Incidents of mistaken release and mishandling of prisoners have been happening frequently, and they're putting Nova Scotians at risk.

Has the Minister of Justice called an investigation to find out what is wrong so this can be fixed?

HON. DIANA WHALEN: I appreciate the question from the member opposite. Certainly this incident of a prisoner escaping shouldn't have happened, so we'll start with that. An investigation was begun right away to get the facts and find out what exactly occurred in the transport. I think it's very pertinent to know that there are 25,000 transports a year that the sheriff's office does take care of, that our sheriffs take care of. As I say, we want to review all of our processes in this case.

MR. MACMASTER: That is positive to hear. Not to pick too much on the member for Cape Breton-Richmond, but at that time, the member indicated - we do this sometimes, Mr. Speaker, in Opposition. Perhaps the minister will agree - the member for Cape Breton-Richmond said these are basic operating requirements to ensure the safety of Nova Scotians that are not being followed. It's only a matter of time before something serious is going to happen or an innocent Nova Scotian is going to get hurt because of these mistakes. I think we can all agree in the Legislature that that's true.

My question for the minister is, does the minister agree that with basic operating requirements not being followed, it is only a matter of time before somebody can get seriously hurt?

MS. WHALEN: I want to assure all the members of the House and all Nova Scotians that we will be looking into this to find out what was wrong, whether things were followed properly, what we can do, and what we can learn from this.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

EECD: EAST. PASSAGE HS - NECESSITY

HON. PAT DUNN: My question is for the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development. A number of schools throughout Nova Scotia are in disrepair, and many need replacing. While many schools in the Halifax area fall into this category, Cole Harbour High is not one of those. A community group indicates that there are currently 1,664 empty desks in high schools in the Dartmouth-Cole Harbour area. I'll table that, Mr. Speaker.

The school board's long-term outlook projects that utilization will be steady at 80 per cent. However, the construction of a new high school in Eastern Passage will reduce utilization by 50 per cent. I'll table that, Mr. Speaker.

My question to the minister, does the minister believe that the building of a new, \$15 million high school within a catchment area for a school that is underutilized is in the best interests of students, parents and taxpayers?

HON. KAREN CASEY: Thank you for the question. I would take the member and all members of the House back to October 2013. At that time there had been a capital plan that had been approved by the previous government. When we came into office it was our commitment to honour the decisions that had been made by the previous government. We did do that. A school in Eastern Passage was one of those. The decision had been made prior to us coming into government and we honoured that commitment.

MR. DUNN: In the December 1st issue of *The Chronicle Herald* a parent of a student from Eastern Passage expressed concern that access to services and programs currently available wouldn't be available to students at the new school. I'll table that, Mr. Speaker.

Improving access to programs and services for students must be the main priority for the department. My question for the minister, does the minister agree that any decision that would spend tens of millions of dollars and potentially lead to fewer services, and even more unused space, would be a bad decision for students?

MS. CASEY: To the member opposite, the decisions about what programs are offered in what school across our province are decisions that are made by the school board and I trust that the school board will certainly be looking at the interests of the students in all schools, as they determine which programs they will deliver.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sackville-Cobequid.

HEALTH & WELLNESS - HOME CARE: RESTRUCTURING - PROVIDERS ADVISE

HON. DAVID WILSON: Last February the Minister of Health and Wellness was considering tendering home care services in our province but during this summer's by-election a continuing care assistant with the New Waterford Home Care Services told *The Chronicle Herald* that she personally received a letter from the minister assuring her that the government's proposal to issue tender for home care would not go ahead, Mr. Speaker, and I'll table that.

During this session of the Legislature the minister told the reporters that the restructuring of the Victorian Order of Nurses would help the VON compete for the Nova

Scotia Home Care tender. I'd like to ask the minister, when will the Minister of Health and Wellness advise all Nova Scotian home care providers about his plan for home care tenders?

HON. LEO GLAVINE: We all know that with home care, as with many of the practices that government has had in the past, are not working as well as they should. We put \$33 million more into home care and we know we still have to get greater efficiencies in order to be able to address all the needs.

It is our hope that contracts can be negotiated without having to go and put it out to tender, requests for proposals. That process now is getting very close to where the department will start a negotiated process with all the providers on that individual basis but will have requirements in those contracts.

MR. DAVID WILSON: I guess the minister forgot to put that in the letter, Mr. Speaker, during the by-election in Cape Breton - convenient for the government at the time.

When Ontario offered a standard tender for home care in the 1990s, the move led to insecure employment, which in turn resulted in low wages and staff shortages and a higher home care wait-list. We don't want to see that happen here in Nova Scotia, Mr. Speaker.

What does the Minister of Health and Wellness have to say to the patients concerned about losing the home care workers who have been caring for them for the last number of years?

MR. GLAVINE: I am pleased the member, a former Health and Wellness Minister, raised that whole issue because one of the requirements, the deliverables in the new contract, will be a requirement to have a very small number of providers going into homes to deliver home care. It provides better quality of care.

What I can say also to the MLAs for Cape Breton in particular today, to follow up on the comments during the by-election, is that the seven agencies in Cape Breton have already taken great measures and great strides to improve efficiencies and work together as units in Cape Breton.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

NAT. RES.: FIREWOOD TENDERS - TIMELINESS

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Acting Minister of Natural Resources. In response to firewood shortages, the Department of Natural Resources has issued three tenders for the harvesting of firewood. These tenders were posted on November 14th and closed on December 4th. Most Nova Scotians who rely on wood heat

would need to have secured and dried their wood supply by now, not to mention problems associated with burning green wood.

My question to the minister is, does the minister agree that the timing of these tenders is not ideal for improving the supply of firewood for Nova Scotians for this heating season?

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, first of all, it is important to recognize that all indications the department has received this year would suggest that market conditions for firewood supply have levelled out and that we have a consistent supply of firewood across the province. We haven't heard of any areas that are suffering from a particular shortage.

The three tenders that we did release were in those three counties, if you remember, where last year we did not receive bids on the tenders that we released. We wanted to try again this year to see if we could find some bids for those specific areas that weren't serviced last year. Of course, this wood would be for next year's season.

MR. DUNN: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that most of the wood supply in Nova Scotia comes from private land. Regardless of volume, we are discussing tenders issued by this government to add firewood into the market from Crown land. As the minister has indicated, last year some of the tenders were not filled. Last year these tenders were open for 20 days in August, and for some, harvesting had to be completed before December 1st.

My question to the minister is, will the department consider posting tenders earlier in the year in order to increase the chances of awarding the contracts and improving the supply of firewood available to Nova Scotians?

MR. CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, the tenders that were released last year were in response to a firewood shortage. When the department was aware that there was a shortage in the market as a result of the reduction in contractors, the department did act. Last year, in partnering with our private-sector friends, along with these firewood tenders that we sent out, we actually tripled the wood supply for last year's market - something I think we can all be very proud of. We wanted to send these tenders out again this year, specifically in the areas where there were no bids last year, to see if the market conditions had changed.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

**HEALTH & WELLNESS:
KINGSTON COLLABORATIVE HEALTH CTR. - COST**

MR. JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness. In a June 4, 2015, article in *The Advertiser*, the minister announced the opening of a Collaborative Care Centre for Kingston in the Annapolis Valley. My question for the

minister is, how much will this Collaborative Care Centre cost, or what has it cost, and when will it be open?

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, I'm awfully pleased that the member for Kings North is concerned about the health of those who live in Kings West. That is a good day for us.

What the member opposite needs to know is that the contract is worked out between the health authority and the developer in the Valley, and that has not been disclosed to me.

MR. LOHR: Mr. Speaker, as the minister knows, frequently when these types of centres are open, such as in Digby, there is community fundraising. There was \$2.1 million raised in Digby, and there has been \$8 million raised for the hospice in the Annapolis Valley. What community fundraising was announced or was done for this project?

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, again, the member opposite probably knows that across the province, when collaborative health practices or centres - this is a collaborative practice and not the comprehensive health centre as we would have in Clare and in Digby. In this case here this is a contract between the doctors, the developer, and the Nova Scotia Health Authority, and so there was no fundraising in this case.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Queens-Shelburne.

NAT. RES. - NAT. RES. OFFICERS: ADDITIONS - NUMBERS

HON. STERLING BELLIVEAU: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Acting Minister of Natural Resources. In 2013, the Province of Nova Scotia regained control of more than 550,000 acres of Crown land - beautiful South Shore forests that are now being used by family and business alike. Respecting and enjoying those new Crown lands is a responsibility that we all share, and the government has a significant role to play.

Can the acting minister tell us how many Natural Resources officers have been added in the last two years to help enforce the laws in the forest?

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, the enforcement division of DNR has actually been transferred to the Department of Environment.

MR. BELLIVEAU: Mr. Speaker, yesterday we learned through news reports that 1,500 charges have been laid in relation to illegal hunting in Nova Scotia within the last four years - and I can table that. In the last budget the government attempted to consolidate conservation officers with Natural Resources with inspectors from Health and Wellness, Fisheries and Aquaculture, and Agriculture into one division of the Department of the Environment.

Can the acting minister tell us what feedback he's receiving from DNR officers about the impact of consolidating these that have the ability to do their job?

MR. CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, of course any direct feedback from our officers would actually be directed to the minister now responsible for those folks. In all honesty, we can say this is a period of transition, amalgamating all of these enforcement units together in one makes sense financially and, of course, logistically - it will take time to iron out any of the challenges that that process has created. At the end of the day, we're going to have a stronger enforcement division for government with resources that are consolidated and being used appropriately under a department whose focus is those very things.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

OMBUDSMAN: COMP. - UPDATE

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Justice.

It has been 21 months since Dwight Bishop, the provincial Ombudsman retired. We do know the government had a competition. They advertised, they had 81 applicants, they had interviews, they even had a successful candidate recommended, but they have held off on hiring for this position. Can the minister explain why?

HON. DIANA WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, that's a very good question. The Ombudsman is an important position; they report to the Legislature, as the members know. I had said, I think you began this question at the end of one of our Question Periods and I had said we were very fortunate to have a very strong person acting in that position, so we can be very assured that the work is being done and very professionally.

But to answer the member's question about the delay, we had looked at combining a couple of different offices. It has been decided now that we're not going to do that, so we'll be looking at this recruitment.

MR. MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, I think the minister might be referring to the Freedom of Information Office and possibly combining with the Ombudsman. Of course, we've asked for the Freedom of Information person to be an officer of the Legislature. We maintain our position on that; we believe that is important for the independence of that office. But hearing - and certainly no disrespect to the acting ombudsperson - I'm happy to hear that the minister is going ahead. We know how important the Ombudsman is - it promotes the principles of fairness, integrity, and good governance, and ensures that government decisions and processes are open and transparent.

Can the minister give some idea on the timing of when the position will be filled by somebody who is not just acting, but somebody who is full-time and in the position for the long term?

MS. WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, I don't have an exact time frame to provide to the House, but I can say that the decision has been made about not combining the two offices and therefore we have given the green light to begin the competition, so that is the next step.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

**COM. SERV. - COST-NEUTRAL COMMUN. HOUSING PROJ.:
REFUSAL - EXPLAIN**

MS. MARIAN MANCINI: Last week the Community Homes Action Group released their 2015 report card on this government's record on fulfilling its commitment to transform services for Nova Scotians living with disabilities. The report card, unfortunately, outlined that service users, service providers, families and experts believe that this government is doing a poor job.

When I asked the minister about why her department had refused a cost-neutral proposal to open a new four-bedroom community home, she did not address the question and I will table that, Mr. Speaker. I will ask again, why has the minister refused a cost-neutral community housing project?

HON. JOANNE BERNARD: The safety and the requirements needed to ensure that everyone who has unique and special needs in the disability community are met are critical to the government. I have said time and time again that we're on track for where we need to be in a decade-long process. Each home that is opened in this province will meet the unique needs of the individuals that will be calling that place home; we're not going to rush it. I was not surprised at the report card last week, I understand the impatience, but we're going to make this transformation securely, safely and responsibly.

MS. MANCINI: Mr. Speaker, according to a briefing note prepared for the minister, obtained by us through a Freedom of Information request, there are 1,100 Nova Scotians on the residential support wait-list, and I will table that. Not only is the minister refusing to create new beds, she is eliminating existing ones. In the CHAG report card one service provider stated that a 10-bed group home for adults who have experienced mental health issues was replaced with a four-bed small options home and I will table that as well.

Mr. Speaker, I don't understand how the minister can say she is making progress on the disability support road map, when the truth is that she is taking us backwards. Can the minister explain decreasing the number of spaces for Nova Scotians with disabilities, when the wait-list is at 1,100 individuals?

MS. BERNARD: In the spirit of the road map for transformation of disability services, clearly advocates and families have told us they do not want 10-bed residential facilities - they want four, five at the most. So individuals that are moved out from larger facilities are moved back into the community, which is exactly in line of what the road map and families deserve and want in this province.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Argyle-Barrington.

**HEALTH & WELLNESS - CONTINUING CARE STRATEGY:
INPUT - RESPONSES**

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, my question, through you, is to the Minister of Health and Wellness. Last summer the government announced they would be seeking input from Nova Scotians on the Continuing Care Strategy. Thousands of seniors and their families have been struggling to get the care that they need across the province and hundreds have ended up in hospital as they continue to wait.

The deadline for feedback was the second week of September, so my question to the minister is how many responses were received and will the minister present that feedback to the House?

HON. LEO GLAVINE: I know that the survey and submissions have gone on through an extended period of time. I have seen the draft copy of the Continuing Care Strategy refresh and we should have that available. It's a document to serve for 18 months while the next five-year or ten-year document is put in place. In fact, to use the words of the member opposite himself, one of the failures of the past strategy was that it didn't get updated and it didn't evolve as it should as times changed.

MR. D'ENTREMONT: Now, one of the proposals in the Continuing Care Strategy plan, or the survey was to impose user fees and direct funding and I'll quote from a Canadian Press article. It says that the minister said ". . . there will also be an examination of user-fee structures." That's from, I believe, July 30th of this year.

At the time of the release the minister said the department will continue to examine the user-fee structures for home care and other services. My question to the minister is, does the minister plan to impose user fees to those seeking continuing care services?

MR. GLAVINE: What I can tell the member opposite, a former Health Minister, is that when the next contracts are made for home care, there won't be a discrepancy from the lowest provider to the highest of \$23.07. That's where the real gains will be made to help all Nova Scotians.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Colchester-Musquodoboit Valley.

COM. SERV.: SOC. ASSISTANCE RECIPIENTS - STRATEGIES

MR. LARRY HARRISON: My question is going to be for the Minister of Community Services. As an MLA, I'm sure every MLA in this room has a number of families coming to them who really cannot afford to live in our present society, at least live well. I often ask myself the question, how can those who are on social assistance possibly get through a month? My question is, does the minister have any strategies now that they are working on so that these folks' lifestyle will be eased a bit?

HON. JOANNE BERNARD: I'd like to thank the member for the question and wish him a happy birthday as well. We have diligently been working on benefit reform since we have taken office. We know that basic necessities in the Province of Nova Scotia are very difficult for people. We know that over previous years, \$18 million has been invested in rates and people still struggle today.

We know we have a system that is antiquated and we know we have a system that doesn't meet the needs of the people who it is supposed to. That's why the investment in benefit reform is going to make comprehensive structural change that will meet the needs of the people who turn to us for help in Nova Scotia.

MR. HARRISON: In trying to address this question, a number of things surface in my mind. One of the things that has surfaced is would it be possible for those who are on social assistance to be able to do just odd jobs, part-time work, get money for those and not be penalized for it?

MS. BERNARD: I thank you for the question. Actually that is happening now. People can work while on income assistance. They are able to keep \$150 and then 30 per cent of their wages. If they are part of a disability program it is \$300 and 30 per cent.

That's really one of the structures that needs to change so that more people who are working can transition off the program without being cut off directly. We know there are many reforms that can happen in income assistance and we are really committed to making those reforms over the coming months.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sackville-Cobequid.

**HEALTH & WELLNESS - ER ACCOUNTABILITY REPT.:
TABLING - TIME FRAME**

HON. DAVID WILSON: Nova Scotians from one end of the province to the other continue to be concerned around closures of emergency rooms. I wonder, could the minister advise the House when he will table the emergency room accountability report in this session?

HON. LEO GLAVINE: The member opposite, a former Health and Wellness Minister, knows it's important to take a look at our emergency room closures. Within that report now, which will be coming out in the next few days, it is important to note that there are now a series of planned closures across the province. The report will show some big improvements and it will also show the areas where we still have challenges.

I look forward to tabling that report and starting to work on the areas that are of concern. One of the areas that we sometimes forget is the service that the member . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. The time allotted for Oral Questions Put by Members to Ministers has expired.

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, would you please call the order of business, Private and Local Bills for Third Reading.

PRIVATE AND LOCAL BILLS FOR THIRD READING

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 125.

Bill No. 125 - Zion United Baptist Church of Yarmouth Dissolution Act.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Municipal Affairs.

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to stand and speak to this bill very briefly. I think it's worth taking a few moments to talk about the history of the Zion Church in downtown Yarmouth, on Parade Street, and commemorate all of the great work that has been done by the parish over the course of its many years of existence.

Unfortunately, this church is no longer with us; the building was in a state of disrepair where there were not the finances of the congregation and the numbers in the congregation to continue to support it. But I will say to that group of people who made the difficult decision to move down this path, they are very courageous for doing that and understanding the sustainability of the church.

I did want to stand and take this opportunity to thank all the great people of Zion Baptist for their years of service to the community, for their years of providing a great and beautiful place of worship for practitioners of that church in the downtown core, and for all of the great memories that I know that many people will have. Unfortunately, that

church is no longer with us today and so we do have to proceed with this piece of legislation. There is a wonderful, commemorative monument at the former site of the Zion Church and I know that the memory of that facility and the great people who have served that church over its years will be well-placed in all of our hearts and minds.

With that said, I move third reading of Bill No. 125. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Argyle-Barrington.

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, I just want to stand and thank the minister for bringing this bill forward. The Zion United Baptist Church was an important landmark in downtown Yarmouth; one, as you went down Parade Street you saw the big old church there with its big steeple, big oculus, as it had its beautiful, round stained-glass window sitting in the front of it.

I actually had the opportunity to go to a number of services there, recording the service. As an employee of Radio CJLS Limited, we had the opportunity of doing the Sunday worship services and, on a couple of occasions, I had the opportunity to go to Zion to see that beautiful old church. What was even cooler is that since I was recording you sort of had to be in the back - you had the little microwave that was pointing toward the radio station so you just had to make sure the levels were okay, so you sort of had to sit in the back. You actually sat in the back by the old pipe organ that sat there and you could see the construction of that church where you saw the exposed beams and the work that went into that building years and years ago.

I know the congregation that tried so hard to keep it there did continue to dwindle over the years and it really just didn't make sense to continue to maintain that. Like the member said, it no longer exists simply because it required such upkeep, I think it was one of the walls - and I forget which one it was, whether it was the west wall or the south wall - one of them was deteriorating to a point where they were truly worried about the safety, of that wall actually collapsing. It would have cost, I believe, in the millions of dollars, if not a million or somewhere a little closer to a million dollars to do it, and the congregation wasn't such that they could actually do it.

Today, as the minister did say, they have a beautiful little park sitting there with a beautiful monument, with the church bell sitting there. It is a good reminder of what was there. It's hard for any region to lose such an important piece of history, but we also have to acknowledge that the churches are there for their congregations. The church is the people who are inside of it, not the building itself. I know that community of faith still continues to reside in other churches in the Yarmouth area, and I know there's a number of those from my constituency who do practise that faith.

With those few comments, I do thank the member for bringing it forward, and just add my own memories of the Zion Baptist Church as well. Thank you very much.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is for third reading of Bill No. 125. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

Ordered that this bill do pass. Ordered that the title be as read by the Clerk. Ordered that the bill be engrossed.

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 137.

Bill No. 137 - An Act Respecting the Repeal of Presbyterian Church Legislation.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg.

MS. SUZANNE LOHNES-CROFT: Mr. Speaker, this bill, as I presented it last week, is more of a housekeeping bill. It is the result of legislation that was passed in Nova Scotia in the early 1900s. It is not relevant anymore, and these churches would now like to be part of the Presbyterian Church of Canada. I know the trustees of the congregation of St. Andrew's Presbyterian in Lunenburg, the Presbyterian Church of St. David here in Halifax, and Knox Presbyterian Church, also in Halifax, will be pleased if this legislation is passed.

I move third reading of this bill.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is for third reading of Bill No. 137. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

Ordered that this bill do pass. Ordered that the title be as read by the Clerk. Ordered that the bill be engrossed.

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, would you please call the order of business, Public Bills for Third Reading.

PUBLIC BILLS FOR THIRD READING

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 135.

Bill No. 135 - Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Resources Accord Implementation (Nova Scotia) Act.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Energy.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 135 be now read a third time and do pass.

This bill will continue the moratorium on oil and gas activity on Georges Bank. That's a commitment we made to Nova Scotians. It will ensure that this area remains protected for the long-term sustainability of our fishing industry.

This legislation mirrors that of our federal counterparts and firmly extends legislative protection to the area for another seven years - to December 31, 2022. In addition, the moratorium can be extended in 10-year increments following a review of socio-economic and environmental impacts. This review is part of a responsible approach to offshore development and environmental protection.

I'm pleased to have all Parties speak positively in support of this bill in this House. I now move that the bill be read a third time.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Argyle-Barrington.

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Like in second reading, I took a few moments to speak to this bill because of Georges Banks' importance to the economy of southwestern Nova Scotia, specifically my constituency, but also the neighbouring constituencies around it.

Georges Bank is, I would say, the most lucrative fishing bank in the world, not only bringing us year after year of great fishing - the species on it are great - but it keeps getting better, it seems, year over year. I come from a family of scallop fishermen, as I've said before, where my dad spent 40 years, I believe, fishing on Georges Bank. I remember a day and the change of that fishery, how it just seemed to get better every year.

Scallop fishing, as you know, is dragging the bottom of the ocean and bringing up rocks and scallops and lobsters and fish and flounder and whatever else comes up with it. Years ago as the draggers would drag along the bottom and they would bring up all kinds of stuff. The men who were working on the boats at the time would have to pick up all those big rocks and chuck them back overboard and put all those scallops into baskets and bring them off to get them shucked, in order to put them in bags and get them home for market.

When my dad started 40 years ago, barely any of those boats had radar on them. Many of them didn't have a Loran-C on them. A lot of them just had good, old, grizzled captains who knew where to point the boat and how to get it to Georges Bank every time. They just knew where they were on that bank from the soundings they would take. A lot of times they would take soundings by hand to know where they were on the bank and they would know where to put their drags down and catch fish.

Well fast forward that to the last few years of my dad's career as a fisherman; gone was the day where you just pointed the boat. Of course you had a GPS - they had skipped over the Loran-C, that's a whole other debate in this House to talk about Loran-C and how they used those numbers to get to Georges Bank. You press the GPS button on those big, 140-foot, 150-foot, 160-foot boats and it would find its own way to Georges Bank. Not only that, but it would find its way to the peaks and valleys on that bank to where the scallops were most plentiful.

Through a lot of work of side sonar, a lot of work of getting the bottom of that bank mapped, the fishermen all of a sudden who had been fishing east-west for years realized that if they went in a different direction or through the peaks and valleys that they could now see in 3-D on their computer screens, not only could they catch even more scallops but also minimize the impact to the environment at the bottom of that water call, to not pull up a whole bunch of other species as they were dragging the bottom of the ocean.

I remember a day on Georges Bank before that when they would go out for their 12-day trip - don't forget, these are larger vessels, there are normally 19 men on board and they go out for a 12-day trip. I remember a day when after that 12-day trip, the boat would come in - this is back in the 1980s - that they would come back to shore with 200 to 300 bags of scallops. I know some people would think that's great but it's not. You need thousands of bags in order to make it a profitable business. As much as I'd like to have 200 bags to eat, which would be very hard to do in theory because they are 30-pound bags, so if you could do the math on that one, it's a lot of scallops still. But to pay for the fuel, to pay for the men, to make sure that everybody makes some money, of course Georges Bank had to produce more.

It was only through the amalgamation of that fishery, the mapping of the bottom of that ocean and the protection it got in 1984, that that fishery is, I would say, the best fishery, the most productive fishery on the East Coast today, on its actual landings of scallops. There are only a few companies that own it, which is unfortunate, because there were a lot more companies that used to partake in the scallop fishery but through that amalgamation, they can protect and take care of that resource much better.

To the point of the bill, it just shows the resiliency of that bank. My dad was a captain on Comeau Seafoods. As he finished up his career of 40 years on it, he ended up being a captain. Can you imagine how proud I am of my dad, knowing that he started off fishing when he was 14 years old? He was on a scallop dragger by the time he was 15 or

16 and he was the captain of the boat for the last 20 years. Not only captain of a boat that with all the intricacies of a boat but I was just talking about - 3-D mapping, I was talking about GPS and finding the peaks and valleys at the bottom of that ocean - he was a great fisherman. He would still be a great fisherman if he was out fishing, but he was a great fisherman at the time and made sure that he came in with hundreds of thousands of pounds of scallops towards the end of his career.

This fishery needs to be protected as well as the groundfish fishery that is prevalent on that bank; the offshore lobster that is on that bank. This bank, I would suggest to you, is the nursery for many of the other banks that are within there - the Browns Banks, the German Banks, on and on, of how it continues to spawn. It needs to be protected because of that special status. Now back in the early 1980s, late 1970s, there were a couple of holes drilled on the American side of the Hague Line, with varying discovery on it.

There was a fair amount of sonar - or what do you call it when they check for the bottom?

AN HON. MEMBER: Soundings.

MR. D'ENTREMONT: Soundings, to see what kind of oil and gas might be in those rocks and it is possible that there are hydrocarbons there. But what balance do you have of a fishery that has provided billions of dollars of economic activity to Nova Scotia versus an industry that is technologically changing, one that I know from the science that I see about oil and gas exploration that it is as safe as it possibly can be.

When you look at the amount of holes drilled in the world and how many accidents have actually happened, it's a very small number. But it's not 100 per cent and until the technology can tell us, I think, that it's 100 per cent, I don't think we should be drilling there. Unless they can show us that there is a way of doing it that doesn't impact around it - don't forget, it's not just the possibility of a blowout on Georges Bank or near Georges Bank. It's the exclusion zones, it's the other products that are there, it's the extra vessels that are going to be in the way, from a safety standpoint.

If you know how dragging works, or longlining works, they need lots of space to turn the boats around, they need lots of space to do the dragging. If they're longlining, there are miles and miles and miles of fish hooks floating along the ocean, so oil and gas exploration in a close area like that would be extremely difficult for the fishery to really get around. It might look big as we look at the map of Nova Scotia, but really it is a very small area when you have a lot of vessels, a lot of boats fishing on that ground.

I do want to say to the minister that I did get a couple of emails and maybe I'll share them with him at a later date, but the questioning that it has does revolve a little bit around the continuation of the moratorium; this bill changes the way it was done. The way it was done was that they would basically put in a ten-year moratorium, and as you got closer to

the anniversary date the government would have to then consult with its partners - that's federally, provincially, the fishery, the environmental groups, and all that - to come up with, should we be able to drill or not? Then they would have to introduce a bill here in the House of Assembly to continue that moratorium. That has been done unanimously in this House since 1986, I believe is when the bill was actually put forward in this House.

What changes in this one now is government still needs to consult, but unless something changes, it redoes itself. It basically continues on after that ten-year period, so there really isn't a set date on the moratorium anymore - it's basically an open-ended moratorium that some government, sometime in the future, might be able to overturn but not without of course coming to this Legislature, without doing a lot of consultation to make sure that that's the right thing to do. I can say for myself, or whoever is going to have my position in the future it's still going to be a very, very difficult thing to open the moratorium on Georges Bank to allow for oil and gas exploration.

Finally, maybe just a quick comment on what's happening in the Shelburne Basin. Of course, Shell is there drilling a couple of holes, trying to see what kind of hydrocarbons they should be able to find in the formations below it. There has been a little bit of controversy around it. We've heard from a couple of groups and a couple of fishing groups that are very concerned about the possibility of blowout. I know there's an issue of science that the CNSOPB must have when it reviews these requests. I can say that I'm relatively comfortable with the science that has been put forward in this one to allow those two drills to happen. There has been a concern about the stacking mechanism that if there is a blowout how much time it takes before a blowout can be stopped. But at the same time, the possibility of that happening is pretty infinitesimal.

I think the other issue that has come forward is the issue of dispersants that we've heard a couple of times. I don't understand the science of that enough to go on with this one, but if there's a better way to do it, then maybe we should continue the science, the research on that, to make sure that we have the best science possible.

If there's a blowout there or if there's contamination there, we don't want it to end up on Georges Bank. I don't know the flows of the waters that much, but I'm just guessing that it's going to end up over there at some point because of the way that big wave of tide flows into the Bay of Fundy.

Again, like I said last time, I thank a number of people who never really let go of the moratorium idea for Georges Bank, the ones who of course championed it back in the mid-1980s. I remember everybody with a bumper sticker on their trucks, "No rigs on Georges." Claude d'Entremont - I continue to thank my friend, Claude, who did pass away a couple of years ago now, but I know he would be very happy to see that his work on this one continues. Claude, who was one of the principals of inshore fisheries, worked tirelessly on this one, working with guys like Denny Morrow. Denny has sent me a couple of emails

on this issue, and again, that's what I'll share with the minister when I have the chance - and many others who worked really hard on this.

This is the right thing to do; I'm glad it's here today. Of course, you'll have our support on that one. So with those short words, I thank the minister very much for this opportunity.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Queens-Shelburne.

HON. STERLING BELLIVEAU: It's certainly a pleasure to rise and participate in the third reading of the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Resources Accord Implementation (Nova Scotia) Act.

I guess I'm going to state my age here now, but I have been involved with it all: the first No Rigs on Georges, the second No Rigs on Georges, the third No Rigs on Georges, and here I am today and participated at the government level of extending that moratorium. To me, the extension of this moratorium is something that our caucus certainly supports, and we want to see this happen.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, the political definition area outlined - it's about the future of Georges Bank and the surroundings.

I've got to give credit; I'd love to be able to coin this phrase and take all the royalties from it. But today I'm hopefully going to outline some factual information here about the concerns of our caucus, and I think the concerns of the fishing industry and environmental groups concerning this issue. The protection of Georges Bank is very important, but we have to know what is happening in the water column around that, and today I hope to point that out.

The important phrase that the staff in our caucus has coined, and I would like to get the royalties off it is: we're not against drilling, it is the spilling that we are concerned about - not the drilling, it's the spilling. To me, that is a catchy phrase because it relates to the elephant in the room. The elephant in the room, Mr. Speaker, is that oil and gas, particularly oil, do not respect boundaries and I'm going to get into that a little later on.

These regulations apply to the oil industry, Shell and BP and just recently, as of November 30th, there are two more additional site approvals by Statoil, and that's what I'm going to focus on here in the next few minutes about the concerns about the industry. We raised these here and I want to tell the Minister of Energy that I am thankful, I am thankful and to the Chairman of the Resources Committee, that we had an opportunity to raise these questions with the oil and gas industry and the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Board.

We raised the concerns and there was a meeting and I am thankful for that; we asked the questions. But I am going to talk about the lack of action and this is where I'm hoping this is going, because what the industry raised is three points.

First of all, since the Gulf spill in about 2010, if off the top of my head here it is correct, off the Gulf of Mexico there was a large oil spill and there's a capping mechanism that has evolved since then and there are five or six in Europe. There are none on the North American soil, none on the Atlantic soil. One of the concerns is having a capping mechanism here in Atlantic Canada and I'll just point them out briefly here.

The second thing is the dispersants that are used. That is the one major issue here and I'm going to relate to some reports later on, but some of the reports point to, and I repeat, the dispersants are 52 times worse than an oil spill. They got my attention as a fisherman; they have certainly got my attention as a fisherman - 52 times worse than an oil spill.

What I saw visiting the Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Board is that they're obsessed - that may not be the right word - but they are convinced that as long as an oil spill doesn't reach the shores of Nova Scotia, we all live in a happy world. Well, I'm going to point out here in the next few minutes that there is documented proof, documented studies that are going in a different direction than what's on that board's website. It's not only documented by science that has caught up with five or six generations of the fishing community, they are going to say otherwise, that they have great concerns of the close proximity of these particular sites, and again I repeat, as I move into the speech, we're not against drilling, we are concerned about the spilling.

Now, there has been a lot of talk, and I listened closely to the members' comments, and I know this is difficult to explain, but I'm going to try to do this. In our Atlantic fisheries Mr. Speaker, we have roughly 45 fishing zones and they basically cover all of Eastern Canada and I'm going to pass them to the Page and I hope I can table them, and I hope the Minister of Energy and the members of the Official Opposition will get a copy. There are 45 lobster zones and if you look closely at those lobster zones you'll see, in that bottom left-hand corner, there is an area there referred to as District 40.

Now District 40, on the right-hand side of that, District 40 is a closed area in Browns Bank and it's closed for a reason. In the 1980s it was determined that this is a protected area for the nursery hatchery for the haddock industry and I can tell you that the fishing industry recognizes that. The important part is that it is also closed for all inshore and offshore lobster activity on a year-round basis, but the interesting point of this Area 40 is that it's literally next door to the last approved sites by Statoil.

Now, if you visit the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Board, they'll go to great lengths, and it's on their website - one in 400 chance of oil reaching Nova Scotian shores.

I'm going to present today - again, I have no diplomas, but I have a few years of background, and I can assure you the fishing industry has at least five or seven generations of knowledge of this particular area in southwest Nova Scotia. What my father taught me, and my parents taught me, was that the Bay of Fundy, which has 160 billion tons of water, every six hours and 13 minutes, ebbs and flows out of that bay. In the Bay of Fundy there is more drift that goes twice as far on the flood as it does on the ebb.

I'm going to get into a couple of reports here, because I know I've got everybody's attention. There are concerns about this dispersant, which is going to be in their toolbox to use in controlling a spill. As I move into the speech - and I raised this before - the biggest concern is that there are two vacant seats on this Offshore Petroleum Board. I want to point out - I went and spent some time to review the website, and I can go into some length, and I see oil industry background, I see a former Premier of Nova Scotia who sits on that board, but it failed the test of saying that there is any relation to the environment, especially to the fisheries or the Aboriginal people. We have two vacant seats, and I suggest to you that we've got a major concern and we should fill those seats with people from our Aboriginal background, from the fishing background, and from the environmental background.

What I'm going to suggest here now is that in one of the reports that I came up with - and I know these people, I spent years in the fishing industry - it's an inshore-offshore lobster report, and it was put together by D.S. Pezzack, M.J. Tremblay, C. Hudon, and R.J. Miller. It has been a number of years. I'm going to read just one paragraph from that report, and I suggest that you all go and do the research. What I'm trying to make is the point that the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Board makes a reference to one out of 400 opportunities that oil will not reach Nova Scotia shores. This document refers to Browns Bank, which is in close proximity - literally next door to it. I'm going to read one paragraph and then table it.

It states, "Surface drifters - Surface drifters released on and near Browns Bank were usually recovered in the Gulf of Maine or Bay of Fundy, but exceptions do occur. Satellite tracked drifters released on Browns in the summer either remained on Browns or drifted toward the Gulf of Maine (Smith 1989). Over 95% of recovered drift cards and bottles released by Harding and Trites (1988) on and near Browns were recovered from the Gulf of Maine; a few recoveries from one of three releases were from near Cape Sable Island. Drift bottles were released between Cape Sable Island and Baccaro Bank on seven occasions between July and October."

One report, and there are several other ones out there, but what I'm bringing here today is common knowledge.

When you say and you put on your website there is a one in 400 chance of dispersants or oil not reaching the shores of Nova Scotia and you put that up against the fishermen's knowledge and what I just tabled there, every one of those references was to a western movement and to the Bay of Fundy, and the drawing of that Bay of Fundy. The

tides had an influence. That is the complete opposite of what that petroleum board is suggesting.

So again, I make reference to if we want to develop this industry, which I'm suggesting we're in favour of, it has to be done in order to protect the environment and to have regulations to protect it. We need educated people, respected people on that board making these decisions.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to point out, I followed this from day one and when the decision was made last June by the federal government to extend or to give this approval mechanism and it was created that the oil companies would have 21 days to have a capping mechanism in place, it got the attention of the fishing industry. It certainly got my attention.

Now an interesting point; the Shelburne Basin approval was in October 2015, interesting, one day after the federal election, Statoil after the federal election was just here in the last few days. I find that interesting, well that's strategic or whatever, I'll let the public determine that but I find that very interesting.

There's also another interesting note and I'm going to talk about some other people who may want to raise some concerns. There was a petition tabled, Mr. Speaker, with 233,000 signatures, a petition to the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Board from Clean Ocean Action Committee. Basically the message was a lack of safety standards and a concern about those 21 days and reducing it to 12 or 13 days is what they have required now.

Again, I think it's obvious that we're not asking for too much, we're simply asking that - to me, the dispersants should be just automatically removed and brought off the table. It would be a good public relations study to say that we understand that there are concerns out there and we want to get this right and we want the industry to endorse it.

Madam Speaker, what I said earlier was that there's an ongoing debate from a 2012 study by scientists at the Georgia Institute of Technology in the United States that found that oil dispersant mixtures can be up to 52 times more toxic than the oil itself. To me that is something that's really important to understand the marine organisms.

What I want to just show up here in the last few minutes, Madam Speaker, is that the oil projectory of their modelling - to me, we have to focus on that because what they seem to suggest from the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Board is as long as the petroleum is spilled and it doesn't come ashore, then everything is good.

I want to spend some time here to explain the ecosystem and the importance of those lobster fishing districts, the halibut, the haddock fishery, all in that general area. I want to point out here one thing right now: if you mark a line from Halifax and you go

across Nova Scotia, from the area west of Halifax, over 60 per cent of the landed fisheries value in Canada is from this area. That's why it is of importance.

I did a speech - if anyone is interested you can research that, April 23, 2015, I talk about doubling fish exports. It is this general area, Madam Speaker, that I'm making reference to. That's why it's so important that the dispersants, first of all, are taken off the table and ask the industry to sit down and be consulted and to get it right. It's because what I'm trying to explain here is that lobster larvae spend the first two months of their lives in the top of the water column - I repeat, in the top of the water column. Now we have the Bay of Fundy, 160 billion tons every six hours and 13 minutes reversing back and forth. That is displacing water somewhere else and I can assure you that is one of the reasons why we have such a generous and bountiful harvest in this general area. It is at the top of the water column, what is the nursery area for the larvae state of all of the species, including lobsters. I'm not going into detail, but I think I've made the point of this area.

This is the point that the Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Board and the oil industry don't seem to get - that water column is basically having an influence all along the Nova Scotia shores and when you put dispersants in there, the first thing that that does is it breaks the oil down. I'm not an engineer, I'm not going there but when a report says that dispersants are 52 times worse than an oil spill, it gets my attention and I believe it has the attention of fishermen who depend on that larvae state. If you understand the ecosystem, zooplankton right up to our large whales, it depends on that water column and it's not just if oil does not reach our shore.

Now, you may say, well, the member for Queens-Shelburne really doesn't have a scientific background to win this argument, and you may put some fair questions out there, that the generations of fishermen may not have the scientific background to win this argument. Well, I'm going to put something here in the next few minutes that I think will be a trump card. I can take you back to 1975, there was a lobster task force report done by the scientific community of Canada and they stated that Atlantic Canada's lobster fishery was doomed. You were going to fail, particularly southwestern Nova Scotia, and I can recite it, I don't have to look at my notes: It said it was in serious trouble - referring to lobster districts in southwestern Nova Scotia - because you only produce 1 to 2 or 3 per cent, less than 3 per cent, of berried females were reproducing, you are doomed.

That was the report. As a young fisherman I sat down and listened to the elders and the elders said don't be concerned, this is what's going to happen - when you remove a predator out of the chain, such as groundfish and finfish, your shellfish will explode - 1975, and we were struggling. I never forgot that.

What we have today, I'm challenging you, I'm challenging the oil companies and I'm challenging the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Board. We, the fishermen of that generation, said the science is wrong. You remove a predator and your shellfish have more opportunity, the larvae state has more opportunity, and the rest is history as I speak.

I went home this weekend and I had the opportunity of walking down to a couple of my wharves, and I don't have to talk to too many people without getting a good sense of what the value of that industry is worth from Digby to Sambro. Three wharves, three individuals, and probably a five-minute discussion. It goes something like this: We are blessed with an industry and people have fished there for 50 years and have seen historical catches year after year after year, and this year they're on track to be the highest of any record. That's what the fishermen have told me, and that is where they are projecting for this to go. (Interruption) I had some for my meal, don't get me wrong.

What I want to get back to, Madam Speaker, is the point that the scientific community questioned, and had some concerns and said the lobster industry was going to fail. The point I'm trying to make here is that fishermen who have generations of knowledge said no, don't be concerned, this is what is going to happen. This is what is going to happen to the shellfish, not only lobsters. The scallop industry is blossoming, the crabs along our Eastern Shore have boomed, they are all a success story and it's just because what I repeated, the fishermen understood that and they understood and they were well connected to the fishery, and this is what we're seeing today.

What we're seeing today is the people say oh, don't be concerned about dispersants, don't be concerned. We have projections and our scientists are showing that it's not even going to come ashore in southwestern Nova Scotia or Browns Bank, which has the only closed area in Atlantic Canada. It's not going to come ashore - one in 400.

I have some concerns with that because of what I just tabled there and the history of the industry shows otherwise. So to me that is certainly of importance.

I'm just going to read this quote here - and I'll table this - from another study, "The dispersant effort is meant to break down the oil so that, over time, the slick is reduced to smaller particles that biodegrade instead of being left as chunky, thick globs that can choke both wildlife and vegetation. But environmentalists, scientists and fishermen have raised concerns that the dispersants could be creating a toxic soup in critical habitats and simply shifting the damage from the oil out of sight."

Now to me that is certainly something that is - and I can go on and I'll just table this here, because this one does great research on this. Samantha Joye talks about dispersants, the concerns about oil, and how that dispersant has been used in the Gulf of Mexico - the list of these studies goes on and on. Again, I pointed out that I think it's only fitting that we have two representatives on that board, which are vacant, that should be coming from the fishing industry or the environmentalists. Now I'm getting close to my ending remarks, but I want to paint a picture here. I know the industry has been talking to MLAs and MPs. I want to make reference to this previous federal election. I know that the fishing industry, the executives in southwestern Nova Scotia, in the fishing industry, have met with the MPs for West Nova and South Shore-St. Margaret's, and also the MLA for Yarmouth.

My understanding, through a third party, is that these individuals promised to bring their concerns to the respective Cabinet Tables. This is my job here today - where are their voices in this discussion? The same concerns that I raised here in the last few minutes, they've raised those concerns with the respective MPs and the MLA for Yarmouth. Where are their voices on this bill tonight? I'm looking forward to hearing that as this winds through the House here.

I want to repeat that it's not about the drilling; it is the spilling that we're concerned about. I think that's something that you should stop and reflect on. We are patiently waiting to hear those voices from Ottawa. I know they have a new government, and I will give them ample opportunity - there is a certain learning curve and briefing notes and all that stuff - but I know that they pledged and they promised the executives of these organizations that they would bring these issues forward.

I want to be the first in this House to congratulate the Speaker of our Parliament, Geoff Regan. I sincerely appreciate him achieving that, but he also has an opportunity to bring his concerns of the constituents of Nova Scotia to the respective colleagues there. I know that the Speaker of the House is concerned about heckling - well, I can tell you, Madam Speaker, through you, that the Speaker of the House may get heckled if he doesn't bring these concerns up for fellow Nova Scotians. So we're all patiently waiting for those voices to be heard on this particular concern, especially the use of dispersants, the capping mechanisms, and the vacant seats.

There was another interesting member on that board. We know that we have a former Premier of Nova Scotia who actually sits on the petroleum board. I wish him well, but I hope that he reflects and brings his expertise to the concerns of the public of Nova Scotia.

Madam Speaker, there's one more MP that I think everybody knows, and that is Mr. Bill Casey. I want to point out that I followed his career, and he certainly had a strong opposition to the debate during the Atlantic Accord. I know how some of this has all evolved is because Bill Casey knows this file very well. Mr. Casey was named Best Constituency MP by *Maclean's* magazine in 2009, and again, I ask the question, where is Mr. Bill Casey's voice today? You know, he's there to work and ensure that all people are represented that he works for and enriches their life - this is on his website. So if this is a great concern to Nova Scotians, I'm looking forward to hearing those voices regarding this particular topic.

As I get closer to my closing remarks, here is a simplistic request. We're talking about coexisting the development of oil on offshore grounds and to coexist with the fishing industry. I don't think that is a big demand. There are three things that we pointed out: a capping stack mechanism and a better response than 13 days, the dispersants use, and the vacant seats on the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Board.

I just want to circle back and say that the capping mechanism, or the capping stack, was brought up in the emergency meeting that we had regarding the Resources Committee, and I was pleased with that. What I heard in their defence was, well, the member for Queens-Shelburne is raising some concerns about a \$50 million capping stack and \$50 million for a capping stack - almost a we're-going-to-break-the-bank scenario. We have seven in Europe but we haven't got one on the Atlantic seacoast, and it was \$50 million. And then, well, we have to have a vessel, and we have to have a heavy-lift vessel, which is going to cost somewhere between \$500 and \$700 million - three-quarters of a billion dollars - and it was the money that they were concerned about, and how could they afford this?

I'm going to give you a suggestion, Madam Speaker. We have a newly-elected Prime Minister, and I wish him well. I also heard in the campaign that he was going to introduce three years of deficit and he was going to introduce infrastructural spending as a key of his platform as he became Prime Minister. In fact, I wrote that down. Now, if you use that common-sense approach, and if you hear all these voices that I just referred to - our MPs sitting in Ottawa now - wouldn't it be a great idea to have a capping stack in Atlantic Canada and a heavy lift vessel, whether it's \$500 million or \$700 million, built and manned in Nova Scotia to address the needs of the offshore fishing industry? That is not a complex scenario. That is simplistic.

We have a prime minister who is committed to infrastructure money, now we need the voices. We need the voices to stand up towards representing Nova Scotia to bring these concerns forward. Like I said before, it's not the drilling; it's all about the spilling, and we have made a number of simple requests.

I believe the record will stand by itself. To me, that is something that we should be supporting. We should all be working to have a co-operative approach to the development of our offshore and to protect our fisheries. We're not going to do it at the expense of the environment or fisheries. I think if we have the commitment from our elected officials - and I know that the MLA for Yarmouth is paying attention - I'm looking forward to his response to my comments tonight. Thank you very much for your time.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Energy.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: I listened with interest to the remarks of my colleagues. I know that on second reading, my good friend from Clare-Digby also spoke on this bill. The fact is that any time that a Georges Bank moratorium has come before this House, there has been all-Party support. I am pleased to see that we have that here again. I want to thank the member for Argyle-Barrington, who certainly appreciates the importance of the fishery, not only in his own family and community but throughout the southwestern region and the province.

Madam Speaker, I'm going to be brief, but I can't help but say a few words as to what we just heard from the member for Queens-Shelburne. It's one thing to raise concerns on behalf of constituents; it's another thing to be blissfully ignorant about the actual facts that are involved around that. For whatever reason, the member continues to stand and make statements in this House that are completely false. You don't need a degree to make false statements - no degree required. At the end of the day, it's one thing to raise concerns, but when you stand up in the House and you create unfounded fears around dispersants or anything else, when you don't have the facts as to how they're actually used and you continue to repeat that, Madam Speaker, that is nothing more than fear mongering, is what it is, and that's absolutely unfortunate.

Let me just remind the member because obviously - I can understand he may have forgotten from his time in government because - I'm trying to remember what his portfolios were - maybe he wouldn't have been involved in these discussions (Interruption). Let me read the statements first, and then we'll talk about what portfolios he held.

The first one is on January 20, 2012. "Premier Welcomes Shell to Nova Scotia Offshore: Shell was a pioneer in Nova Scotia's oil and gas industry, making our first offshore discovery in 1969, said the premier." - who actually was Premier Dexter at the time. "They are an excellent company with strong environmental, health and safety records, as well as significant experience drilling in deep waters. We are thrilled to have them as a partner in the responsible development of our offshore resources."

One more from November 16, 2012 - again possibly the member for Queens-Shelburne wasn't paying too close attention due to his portfolios - it went on to say, "The premier pointed out that the offshore petroleum board oversees a careful and vigilant bid process to determine exploration rights. The board also has one of the most stringent regulatory regimes in the world to ensure businesses that operate in Nova Scotia do so in a safe and responsible manner."

Madam Speaker, that is what the NDP believed when they were in government. I understand that the member may not have been involved. I know he was Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture, so possibly he wasn't following this file. But he had another portfolio, if I'm not mistaken (Interruption) Environment, yes, that's right. So I understand how he may not have been following these discussions and suddenly has a newfound interest in this.

The fact is that this bill extends the moratorium on Georges Bank. That is a good thing for Nova Scotia. It was a good thing when the moratorium was first put in place. What's unique about this process is that this will not have to come back before the Legislature in Nova Scotia or the Parliament of Canada. This now sets in force the process of renewing this legislation without needing it to go in front of the Legislature or Parliament, which I think is even stronger reassurance for the fishing industry, southwest Nova Scotia, and all Nova Scotians, to know that this moratorium will remain in place.

Madam Speaker, I move to close debate on third reading of Bill No. 135.

MADAM SPEAKER: Before closing the bill, I would like to remind the honourable minister that to say someone is ignorant is unparliamentary.

The motion is for third reading of Bill No. 135. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

Ordered that this bill do pass. Ordered that the title be as read by the Clerk. Ordered that the bill be engrossed.

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Madam Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 134.

Bill No. 134 - Liquor Control Act.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Business.

HON. MARK FUREY: Madam Speaker, I move that Bill No. 134 be now read for a third time and do pass.

I would like to take a moment to speak briefly once more to the purpose of Bill No. 134. We have amended Bill No. 134 after receiving additional feedback from stakeholders who attended the Law Amendments Committee last week. I want to thank those who appeared before the Law Amendments Committee for their presentations and their input. This is in addition to the feedback we received over the past several months in our consultation with the Nova Scotia Liquor Corporation, Mental Health and Addictions Services of the Nova Scotia Health Authority, the Wine Development Board, Restaurants Canada, the Department of Health and Wellness, manufacturers, and others.

We value the feedback we received at the Law Amendments Committee, and I believe the revised language ensures that the wording of the bill precisely matches the intent, which is to limit the changes solely to manufacturers, to eliminate the need for manufacturers of Nova Scotia products to have a distinct retail space to sell their products, and to reduce red tape in a manner that supports the continued success of a vibrant and important Nova Scotia industry.

Nova Scotians can already legally purchase products at our wineries, distilleries, and breweries. They may visit a winery, for example, for a tour, for a tasting, or to enjoy dinner. Upon their departure they may wish to purchase a bottle of Nova Scotia wine to take home and enjoy or to present as a gift.

The changes we are proposing with Bill No. 134 will simply mean that they can purchase that wine from the licensed area of the winery, the brewery, or the distillery, instead of having to visit a separate retail location. The changes simply give both the manufacturer and their guests an option to make a purchase from, as an example, the premises, restaurant, or tasting area, instead of a distinct retail space, whereas right now manufacturers can only sell their products from a distinct and separate retail area.

The changes proposed by Bill No. 134 in no way enable the sale of alcohol by any retail sector beyond local manufacturers who hold a permit with the Nova Scotia Liquor Corporation, nor do they enable government to take action to make changes to the Nova Scotia Liquor Corporation's business model. The revised language of the bill makes this very clear. This is a change the manufacturing industry asked us to make, and it is the right thing to do for small business.

Concerns have been raised that these changes will mean that all future changes to the Liquor Control Act can be done solely by the Executive Council, without having to come back to the floor of the Legislature. I want to assure not only my colleagues in Opposition but all stakeholders and Nova Scotians that that will not be the case. Bill No. 134 does not give Executive Council the authority to bypass the legislative process and make changes to the Liquor Control Act at the Cabinet Table. By definition, changes to an Act have to be made by the Legislature. Rather, Bill No. 134 is simply providing us with the regulatory authority to make regulations under the Act, authorizing the sale of liquor manufactured by licensees who have a permit to manufacture that liquor issued by the Nova Scotia Liquor Corporation. These changes are absolutely restricted to liquor manufactured by liquor licensees who hold NSLC manufacturers' permits.

I want to ensure that there is clarity on the record on this, Madam Speaker. Bill No. 134 only applies to the offsite sale of alcohol where these two conditions exist and I'll repeat them for the record: the licensee must have a liquor license issued by Service Nova Scotia and they must hold a valid manufacturers' license issued by the Nova Scotia Liquor Commission.

There is no other intent at play with this legislation. Bill No. 134 is about cutting red tape for manufacturers so that we can help them become more competitive, that is it. Any future changes to the Liquor Control Act beyond those addressed by Bill No. 134 will absolutely need to come back to the Legislature.

Madam Speaker, a question was also raised last week as to why I, as the Minister of Service Nova Scotia, and not the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board, introduced Bill No. 134. I again want to ensure that there is clarity on the record on this point. Different entities have responsibilities for different sections of the Liquor Control Act. The Department of Finance and Treasury Board is responsible for the supervision of the administration of the Nova Scotia Liquor Corporation. Section 14 of the Liquor Control

Act, which relates to general supervision and management over licensing and management of licensed premises, is the responsibility of the Minister of Service Nova Scotia.

Madam Speaker, in addition to the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board and the Minister of Service Nova Scotia having authority for aspects of the Liquor Control Act, the Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board and the Executive Director of the Alcohol, Gaming, Fuel and Tobacco Division at Service Nova Scotia also have authority for specific sections under the Liquor Control Act.

Madam Speaker, my colleagues opposite who were in government before us would be familiar with the various authorities assigned under the Liquor Control Act. In fact, when my colleagues opposite were in government, previous to us, the former Minister of Finance, Mr. Graham Steele, and the former Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations, Mr. John MacDonell, both introduced amendments to the Liquor Control Act. I'd like to table those to clearly identify the authority that rests with both the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board and the Minister of Service Nova Scotia.

Finally, Madam Speaker, I know that Nova Scotians, in addition to wanting their government to cut red tape and support Nova Scotia industries, expect that the sale and consumption of alcohol will be undertaken in a responsible way that ensures public safety. As someone who has spent 30 years in law enforcement, I've seen and had to deal with the risks and the implications of the misuse and abuse of alcohol. I take this very seriously and I will strive to ensure that any changes this government undertakes to the Liquor Control Act will consider the health and safety implications in three areas: public access to alcohol, public responsibility around the sale and consumption of alcohol, and public safety.

Madam Speaker, the liquor inspectors and the licensing staff who work in the Alcohol, Gaming, Fuel and Tobacco Division of Service Nova Scotia are also diligent in expecting all licensees on a regular basis to ensure there is full compliance and that the sale of alcohol in Nova Scotia is conducted in a responsible manner. Any new licensed establishments also receive training from the Alcohol, Gaming, Fuel and Tobacco staff on the responsible sale and use of alcohol.

Madam Speaker, as we look at ways to modernize the Liquor Control Act, we will continue to consult with stakeholders and aim to strike a balance between reducing red tape for Nova Scotia businesses, while ensuring that appropriate and reasonable legislation and regulations are in place to control the sale and consumption of alcoholic products.

Madam Speaker, I look forward to comments of my colleagues and will be seated myself.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: Madam Speaker, it's an honour for me to rise here on third reading of Bill No. 134, amendments to the Liquor Control Act. As we've stated earlier, support for this bill is a good thing. It includes only minor changes to the Liquor Control Act which will help reduce red tape for our manufacturing industries of businesses such as breweries, wineries, and distilleries.

I know in my own constituency I have a microbrewery, the Breton Brewery Company, and in the Whycocomagh area we have the Big Spruce Brewing company, and in Guysborough we have the Authentic Seacoast Distilling Company that have Fortress Rum that's aged in barrels at the Fortress of Louisburg. So in order to cut red tape to allow sale of their products in their facilities, not offsite, it's a good thing. We also introduced a red tape action so anything that will help reduce red tape for business, in our eyes, is a good thing to have and a good thing to do.

We know that this is enabling legislation that allows regulations and allows manufacturers to also have licences to sell their products without having a separate retail space. Our only concern at the time was that the unintended consequences that this bill may have had, and I'm assured from the minister during his introduction of third reading that that has been addressed and that the regulations that are in place are only to help with the people who have licences to manufacture alcohol to sell it on their premises, that it's not going to be transferred to licences where a restaurant that is a family licensed restaurant will be able to serve alcohol only and not food to go with it.

We'll take the minister at his word that that's the case and that he will bring any further changes to the floor of this Legislature to make sure that any of the things that happen from here on in will be debated openly and fairly here in the Legislature, and these changes will help our businesses which are huge in our province for our tourist industry, and anything that helps increase economic development of our province we're behind.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable Acting Leader of the New Democratic Party.

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Madam Speaker, I'm pleased to have an opportunity to rise in my place and say a few words on the third reading of this bill, Bill No. 134.

I want to thank the minister for his remarks because I think the minister has probably given one of the best third reading speeches with respect to a bill and the provisions of the bill and the amendments that the government has made to that bill that I've heard in my time here in the House. It is very greatly appreciated - but he didn't provide any samples from the manufacturers, a criticism I made on second reading.

However, it is, I think, reassuring. It is the job of the Opposition throughout the legislative process to raise any concerns about how bills might have an impact and I think

it was certainly a fair concern and the government amended their bill. The concern, of course, was that the initial language did not capture what the government had said that the bill was intended to do. Now that the bill has been amended, it does reflect what the government's intent was - and that's how the process should work. The process should be one where we have an opportunity to amend legislation that doesn't do what the government sets out to do.

Often people from our province who have a lot of expertise on the ground - having been in a department where you have officials develop legislation, the view from 14 stories up is not the same view that you have on the ground floor. It's very useful to hear the perspectives of people who are very close to the kind of work.

I just want in closing to say that we all, I think, in this Legislature and in our province are very proud of the emerging wine industry but not just the wine industry, the craft brewing industry and certainly the distilleries as well. We have unique products in our province. They are winning awards across the country and around the world and we have some real opportunities to expand these industries, and so I congratulate the government for looking at ways to make that happen. I think that's very important and at the same time I think it is incumbent upon us to look at, especially in the area of liquor, to ensure that everything is done in a very responsible manner. So, it's encouraging to know that this provision is particularly to enhance the industry that is growing.

So, again I want to thank the minister for his comments and I'll take my seat Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: If I recognize the minister it will be to close the debate.

The honourable Minister of Business.

HON. MARK FUREY: I move to close debate on third reading.

MADAM SPEAKER: The motion is for third reading of Bill No. 134. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

Ordered that this bill do pass. Ordered that the title be as read by the Clerk. Ordered that the bill be engrossed.

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Madam Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 127.

Bill No. 127 - Labour Standards Code.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Labour and Advanced Education.

HON. KELLY REGAN: I move that Bill No. 127 - an Act to Amend Chapter 246 of the Revised Statutes, 1989, the Labour Standards Code - be now read a third time and do pass.

These amendments extend compassionate care and bereavement leaves to give employees more time to care for a very sick family member, or to grieve the loss of a loved one. The federal Compassionate Care Benefit allows eligible Canadians to draw Employment Insurance when they take time off work to care for a very ill family member, who has a significant risk of death. Our amendments, Madam Speaker, will extend compassionate care leave from eight to twenty-eight weeks and protect employee's jobs while they're on leave.

These changes will align Nova Scotia's protective leave with Canada Labour Code changes and federal increases in EI Compassionate Care Benefits that are scheduled to take effect on January 3, 2016. In fact, Madam Speaker, Nova Scotia is the first province to bring its labour code in line with the federal compassionate care changes.

Madam Speaker, these amendments will also lengthen unpaid bereavement leave to five consecutive working days for employees dealing with the death of a close family member.

I'd like to briefly outline and address some of the feedback we've received on this bill at Law Amendments Committee, Madam Speaker. The department was asked to consider amending the definition of family member as it relates to bereavement leave, to match the definition used for compassionate care leave. The department has had an opportunity to consider that request, Madam Speaker. However, at this point we've decided to move forward with the bill as is. The reasoning is, simply put, that Nova Scotia is not the only place where the definition of family member differs and where the compassionate care leave definition is broader than for bereavement leave.

I also want to note that we did not mention any possible changes to the definition of family member for bereavement leave, when we consulted on these proposed amendments. Such a change would be quite significant. The Opposition Parties have signaled to use repeatedly this particular session that they want to make sure that we consult, and we did consult on the bill that we brought in and we have not consulted on the changes that they're asking for.

So with that said, Madam Speaker, should the department hear that there is concern about the definition of family member as it relates to bereavement leave, we would not be

opposed to further reviewing and consulting on such a change in the future. For now though, we're moving forward with the positive changes proposed in Bill No. 127.

Madam Speaker, I'll wrap up by noting once more that Nova Scotians who might need these kinds of leave are dealing with heartbreaking situations. These changes are the right thing to do. They will ensure families can focus on what's important during very difficult times: each other.

I look forward to the closing remarks from my colleagues across the floor.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: It's interesting to see this bill come forward, Madam Speaker, because a job in Nova Scotia in this day and age is something that we all cherish. But when it comes to a sick or gravely ill family member or a family member who has passed on, it's nice to know that you can take that time to be with your family member and/or your family to provide the necessary care to them during their last few days, weeks, or months of illness and to know that you have a job to go back to when the unfortunate thing happens at the end of that illness. To know that this has been done in line with the federal changes to the employment insurance benefits to those taking unpaid compassionate leave is a nice comfort for people who may have to be facing that situation.

We'd love to be able to see that that wouldn't be the case, that no employer in this province would have to go through that, but we all know too well that every one of us in this Chamber will be faced with that experience at some time or another. To know that a job will be waiting for you after such a grave time in your life, when you've watched a loved one deteriorate and eventually pass on, and to know that your days of bereavement leave have been extended to allow you the proper time to deal with what has happened and to deal with the way it happened on your own terms, to allow you that time to have that happen - we are pleased that the provincial government followed the leadership of the federal government and allowed this to happen.

As the minister just stated about the definitions for bereavement and compassionate leave, they hadn't done the consultation on it. Let's hope that over the next year or so, they will look into the consultation to do that, to allow those definitions to come in line with each other so that people will be able to take the time to do the right thing for their family but also maintain a job that's so important in this province.

I thank the government for bringing forth this legislation because it's something that people in Nova Scotia who have a job, who have a sick family member, would be able to take care of both and have that to go back to when they're finished. Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sackville-Cobequid.

HON. DAVID WILSON: I, too, want to stand just for a few brief moments on Bill No. 127, the Labour Standards Code. We had raised some concerns on second reading around the definition of family member when dealing with bereavement and compassionate leave. I understand the minister somewhat agreed that there might be some concerns there and is open to looking at changing that if it's needed in the future.

With respect to that, I would have hoped that the government would have recognized - I don't think there would have been too many people out in the public who would have condemned the government for clearing up the definition and making sure it's very clear for Nova Scotians on where they stand when it comes to bereavement or compassionate leave. I think everyone would acknowledge that it's important, when something happens in your family, either the death of a family member or the need to take some compassionate leave because of a significant illness, that people would understand that.

To have clarity in the bill when we have it in front of us I think was a great opportunity and a missed opportunity for the government to make sure the intentions are very clear to Nova Scotians. We sit in the Legislature twice a year, so we may not be back here until the Spring, sometime after March maybe, sometimes in April or May or June. But we don't sit around the clock or around the calendar so changes are very difficult to get put in place if those changes are needed. I welcome the minister's comments indicating that if it needs clarification, they'll attempt to do that, but I think this was a great opportunity to do that.

We do support the bill, as a caucus, but definitely want it to be on the record to indicate that this was the optimal time for government to make sure that those definitions are very clear for all workers here in Nova Scotia when it comes to a bereavement leave or compassionate leave when dealing with what the definition of a "family member" is. With that, Madam Speaker, I'll take my place.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg.

MS. SUZANNE LOHNES-CROFT: Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak on an Act to Amend Chapter 246 of the Revised Statutes, 1989, the Labour Standards Code. I'm pleased to be speaking of this legislation today, as it was presented a couple of weeks ago by the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education. For the Labour Standards Code, this change will bring compassionate care and bereavement leaves for workers in Nova Scotia, and it will give them more time to care for their gravely ill family members and to mourn the loss of close family as well.

On November 23rd the Law Amendments Committee considered Bill No. 127, which outlines the amendments in this Labour Standards Code that will extend compassionate care and bereavement leave. I listened to the comments from the member for Northside-Westmount and Sackville-Cobequid, and I'm glad to hear their support of

the bill, other than the definition of “family” continuing to be an issue for the member for Sackville-Cobequid. But as we’ve seen before, we have made adjustments to bills here, and we may, if it becomes a problem, have to look at that again.

There was no really strong opposition to the bill as it is currently drafted. It is positive and it’s a significant step toward making the workforce a better place for workers in Nova Scotia.

The meeting heard a presenter who supported the bill but asked the committee to consider the family member issue. We took it back and we really found it was very difficult to find a match for that. The committee has looked at it, and the department. In considering the presenter’s proposed change, the department did a search and a scan to see how other places in Canada define “family member.” As it turned out, Nova Scotia isn’t the only place where the definition of “family member” differs and where the compassionate care leave definition is broader for bereavement leave.

There are a number of jurisdictions, including the federal government, with varying definitions. The department also wanted me to mention that the definition of “family member,” as it relates to these leaves, has differed for a number of years, and staff are not aware of any concerns about employees receiving compassionate care leave and then not getting the time off for the death of their loved one.

Should a family member pass away while an employee is on compassionate care leave, that leave extends to the end of the week in which the death occurred. In many cases, this would give the employee additional time off in the event that they were not covered by bereavement leave.

Nova Scotia is the first province to bring its Labour Standards Code in line with federal compassionate care changes. This amendment will align with federal labour legislation changes and increase in employment insurance benefits for eligible employees caring for a family member who has a significant risk of death. These changes will extend compassionate care leave from eight to 28 weeks and protect employees’ jobs while they are on leave. Employees will have protected leave for both the two-week waiting period and 26 weeks of EI. No one should have to worry about their job, Madam Speaker, when they are caring for an ailing family member.

It also ensures that employers don’t face increased cost. The Labour Standards Code sets the minimum, but that doesn’t preclude employers from providing generous benefits to employees. The leaves are unpaid, so there is no direct cost to the employer.

The Department of Labour and Advanced Education consulted the business community on these changes. The department also noted that a targeted consultation was done with key stakeholders including organizations that represented employers, like the

CFIB; Restaurants Canada, Nova Scotia Division; the Retail Council of Canada; and Restaurants Nova Scotia. We also consulted with the Nova Scotia Federation of Labour.

Overall, there was no opposition to these changes. What they did hear was employers supported their employees in these kinds of situations and see it not only as the right thing to do, but also good business practice. However, possible changes to the definition of family member, as it relates to bereavement leave, were not discussed with stakeholders as part of that consultation.

Such change would be significant as it would substantially broaden the scope of bereavement leave. The department feels that changes to broaden the definition of family member, as it relates to bereavement, should not be made without consulting those it affects. The department also mentioned that the definition of family member as it relates to these leaves has differed for a number of years and staff are not aware of any cases where people have been denied compassionate leave.

Also, an employer can hire a replacement worker to fill in for an employee on compassionate care leave. This government understands that Nova Scotians, who are dealing with heartbreaking situations, might need this kind of leave and need to have this kind of option. In the two years that I have been a member of this Legislature, I have lost two close family members. I know how challenging it is for family members to be working when their hearts are breaking and they want to be at the bedside. Also, it is costly to have round-the-clock palliative caregivers in one's home. Family members often are the caregivers in many of these situations and supported by services like the VON, and Home Care, this frees up family to do this.

Let's remember that much of today's workforce is the sandwich generation, like me. These people have the responsibility of raising their children, while caring for elderly parents. Being able not to have to worry about losing a job when they are caring for a very ill parent, just think, families will be able to focus on what's important during difficult times: each other.

Further, the amendments will also lengthen the unpaid bereavement leave for employees dealing with the death of a close family member. These will closely align Nova Scotia bereavement leave with other provinces. Unpaid bereavement leave will be extended to five consecutive working days, for employees dealing with the death of a close family member. The change more closely aligns our bereavement leave with several other provinces like New Brunswick, Saskatchewan, and Quebec. It also ensures employers don't face increased costs.

The Labour Standards Code sets the minimum, but that doesn't preclude employers for providing more generous benefits to their employees. Should a family member pass away during a compassionate leave that leave extends to the end of the week in which the

death occurred. In many cases, this would give the employee additional time off in the event that they were not covered by bereavement leave.

These amendments will alleviate a great deal of stress for employees and their families in their time of grief. It allows families to deal with the many arrangements and responsibilities that fall on a family, following the death of a loved one. Should the department hear of concerns about the definition of a family member as it relates to bereavement leave, it would not be opposed to further reviewing and consultation on such changes.

The federal changes are expected to come into effect on January 3, 2016, so Nova Scotia will proclaim, should this lobby pass, to align with the EI changes federally. These amendments will give Nova Scotians more time to care for gravely-ill family members and also to mourn the loss of a close family member. I think this bill is good for workers and I think it's good for Nova Scotia. Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Labour and Advanced Education.

HON. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, I now move to close debate on third reading of Bill No. 127.

MADAM SPEAKER: The motion is for third reading of Bill No. 127. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

Ordered that this bill do pass. Ordered that the title be as read by the Clerk. Ordered that the bill be engrossed.

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Madam Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 118.

Bill No. 118 - Heritage Property Act.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage.

HON. TONY INCE: Madam Speaker, I move that Bill No. 118, amendments to the Heritage Property Act be now read a third time and do pass.

Madam Speaker, I want to thank all who contributed to the making of this bill and the amendments brought during Law Amendments Committee. I'd also like to thank my

department staff who worked closely with stakeholders to develop the amendments, which will enable municipalities to accomplish their work more efficiently.

This bill will help to protect important pieces of our heritage by making processes clearer and more reasonable, and by adding cultural landscapes as a new type of Municipal Heritage Property. The work that underpins these amendments began with a comprehensive review of the Act in 2010, with a follow-up to the heritage stakeholders in March 2015. The Heritage Trust of Nova Scotia, the Advisory Council on Heritage Property and 14 municipalities provided detailed feedback during consultations this summer. We were pleased with the level of response and the support that Nova Scotia Municipalities provided on this bill.

Two stakeholders contacted us this Fall and we heard their interest and made the changes, like a good government is elected to do. I look forward to continuing the work with all these passionate and committed stakeholders, as well as developing regulations in the coming months. Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: It's an honour to speak to Bill No. 118, the Heritage Property Act, and as we've said all along, we are supportive of this bill, with some of the conditions that needed addressing. We heard from a number of different people in Law Amendments Committee, including the Heritage Trust and we're pleased to see that some of these amendments were accepted. However, we are disappointed to see that some of them were not adopted by the government. There's no doubt this bill has improved, but we think it could be a little bit better.

We know, Madam Speaker, heritage properties are a direct line to our tourism industry here in the province. They bring people into an area to look at some of these buildings and to tour some of the areas, but during Law Amendments Committee we heard from a lot of people in the city and a lot of conditions that happen here in the city, we didn't hear as much from the people outside in the rural areas of Nova Scotia. We know it allows people to register their property a lot easier and in a more expedient way, but there still are some concerns around deregistration of the property.

We also heard that during Law Amendments Committee and during the bill that people can deregister after three years, even if they don't have to go through the proper channels through the new Act. So this concerns us because the bill is designed to protect heritage properties. We are supportive of the bill, Mr. Speaker, we've had our say, and we want to see this bill move forward. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Truro-Bible Hill-Millbrook-Salmon River.

MS. LENORE ZANN: It also gives me pleasure to rise here in my place today to talk about Bill No. 118, the Heritage Property Act, and I am very interested in this bill. Our NDP caucus is going to be supporting it, but we also do have some reservations as well, some of which we did raise before. I want to thank the minister responsible and say thank you so much for listening to our concerns and listening to the concerns of the stakeholders who had come to Law Amendments Committee. That does show very good government, and I say thank you to him in particular.

I know sometimes it's a difficult road to hoe, and it's hard to balance all the varying different interests that come at you, especially when you are in government, and to try to find that fine, fine line to walk down is very hard, and sometimes you can't make anybody happy. But I have to say that I think the changes that he did make and that the department made are very good, but there are a couple that we are still concerned about.

We did mention some of them in the Committee of the Whole that we would like to see changed, which were voted down. There were a couple of them that we felt that the positive changes were actually - it was better off with the present Act not being changed, that would allow unspecified extra reasons for provincial deregistration if the reasons were approved by a future Cabinet. That one concerned us. Also, the fact that there could be unspecified extra reasons for municipal deregistration if the reasons were approved by future Cabinet. That also concerns us.

Finally, there was that the Cabinet could make regulations in matters including provincial and municipal deregistration, now controlled by the Legislature. This isn't desirable for a few reasons, and that's because an Act actually has a higher status than regulations. An Act can only be changed by the Legislature with notice and with the opportunity to be heard and after open debate, whereas regulations can be changed in private with no discussion or public input.

A property owner might then find out that a future Cabinet, for instance, has changed the regulations without notice, affecting what that property owner could do with his or her property. A municipality also might find out that a future Cabinet had changed the regulations without notice, which would then affect the powers of the municipality. Also, regulations are more likely to be challenged in court. We had actually mentioned some of these concerns earlier in second reading, and the people who came forward also mentioned these in Law Amendments Committee.

That particular change did not get changed, so that is something that the minister might want to take another look at with his department when he has some more time. Many of us feel that heritage properties are so important to our region, for our tourism, and it disturbs me when sometimes in Law Amendments you hear government members say things like, well, isn't it better just to tear down these old buildings and put up new developments? Well, I find that kind of attitude is not very progressive thinking. In fact, many of us come from the old world countries; most of us are immigrants here, other than

the First Nations people, and many of us come from countries in the old world like Holland or Croatia or Scotland or Ireland or Lebanon or Greece. Therefore, surely, we understand the importance of heritage and old buildings, heritage buildings that are thousands of years old, compared to our oldest buildings here which are sometimes 250 years old.

We're not going to get to have that kind of heritage if we keep tearing down our old heritage buildings. When we walk into downtown Halifax, for instance, and you see a great big sign on the Morse's Tea building saying, offices for rent, leasing now, and it's great big letters on this beautiful old building and I think, what kind of sign is that sending people who come here to visit. Meanwhile, they erased off the sign that says Morse's Tea, which was the old original sign, without getting any permission to do so. That's concerning.

Also, for instance, the Simeon Perkins House down in Shelburne, I went down there last summer and took a look around, and that was one of the places that I wanted to see there. There are many old, beautiful heritage properties across the province that people who are interested in history would like to look up, and I'm told that that particular property, because of changes that have been done in the properties next to it, with building and so forth, that now it has been knocked a little bit off its basement and it is flooding; it has some problems with flooding.

This is the modern world then coming in on the old world. We have to be very careful how we look after these things and how we mitigate problems that might come up.

I also think that Schidmerville - some of these heritage districts are so important as well. One of the things the municipality had been concerned about was the fact that Halifax is now actually stepping into the 21st Century and really realizing how important our heritage is. There were a number of years there where there seemed to be this big fight between people who love heritage and developers and the city. In fact it seems that more and more people are now getting on the train that we need to protect and preserve our heritage for generations to come. That doesn't mean you are saying no to progress, in fact you are opening up your arms wide and saying yes, open up, come on in world, we're here, we're open for business. Come and check out our beautiful heritage and see what life used to be like in the old days, because that's what people want to see.

As I've often said, we don't come to Nova Scotia to see skyscrapers. If we want to see skyscrapers we go to New York or Toronto. Nova Scotia is not known for that and I don't really want to become known for that. I want to become known for our beautiful heritage, our culture, our history, our talent, the music, the live theatre. I think we need to really put our money where our mouth is and invest in these things, even for our heritage buildings to be able to stay in good shape, I think more money should be put into that.

For the homeowners who own and have taken the step to take control and look after a heritage home, it's a big commitment. There are some things there to help them but sometimes there's not enough and so there should be more help, I think, more financial

help for those people because they are really just stewards of the property. That's what the Heritage Act and the heritage idea is all about: we are stewards of these properties and we are stewards of this province and we want to leave it better off than what we've inherited. Therefore, we need to look after it.

In this day and age, if we knock down old buildings and heritage buildings, the future is not going to judge us very well. People are going to be very sorry. In Truro, for instance, we had a beautiful old train station. It was gorgeous but the people of the day, which was not that long ago, maybe 30 years ago, they saw fit to tear it down and turn it into a strip mall. The strip mall, yes, it could make a lot of money for the guy who did it but it's ugly and people still today really miss that beautiful old train station. I can't tell you how many times I hear people go oh, it was such a beautiful train station, why did they have to knock it down?

There was another building that the town decided to tear down. They said it was dangerous and that it was going to fall in on people. They put the yellow tape around it - it was the Civic Building - they put these yellow tapes around it and said oh you know, it could fall in on you at any time. By the time they tried to demolish that building, it took them four days to tear it down because it was so sturdily made.

I remember my mother and actually a few other women of the town who were really staunchly involved with saving our heritage - Charlotte MacQuarrie was one and actually Senator Norrie was another - they were all very adamant that to save these old buildings was the future of our town. My mother cried the day they tore down the old Civic Building and nothing was put in its place; it's empty.

We have a farmers' market in the old fire hall, which is beside it, but there's nothing in the spot where that old Civic Building was. Meanwhile, when I moved back to Truro, I noticed that the old Normal College, which is the second oldest teachers' college in all of Canada, was empty and was standing there. It is a Victorian building. It is 24,000 square feet, four stories with a beautiful palladium roof. The word was that the town was going to tear it down.

It's a provincially-designated heritage building and the town was going to tear it down if they couldn't find a purpose for the building. So I said well why don't we turn it into a school for performing arts, something that is for the community, something that the community can use, where different groups can paint, can dance, can do theatre, can rehearse shows and put on shows - and what if we even had artists living there and turned it into an affordable living space for artists with lofts where they could live cheaply and do their art and show their art and sell their art, and have a café downstairs where you could eat and drink and look at the gardens outside? It took us a number of years. We did a feasibility study which proved that actually if we built it they would come.

But in the interim, we still needed a new place for our library. In the end, the town decided, and rightfully so, that we could in fact move the library into that old heritage building. So I feel really good that I put enough time and effort and energy - four years of my life, really - into saving that building and getting the public interested in that building.

Some people were like, just tear it down; it's an old building. What do we want old buildings for? Well, we want old buildings because of these very reasons. We want to be proud of our heritage. We want to have a beautiful place people can come to and go, oh my gosh, look at this gorgeous Gothic architecture. It's stunning! - which it is.

So anyway, long story short - now it is being turned into the library. They're renovating it on the inside; it's still going to be beautiful on the outside. The ugly little library that was put in front of it which is from the brutalism period - a period called "brutalism" - it was basically concrete slabs put together. It looks like a concrete bunker that you were going to, if there was some kind of nuclear holocaust or something you would go into this bunker. Well, anyway, they're going to be moving that away so that you can actually see the beautiful Victorian building which is now going to be Truro's library, and we are all extremely proud of it.

This is an example of how a community can get involved and save our beautiful old heritage buildings and find reasons to keep them. I think that is what we need to do instead of just making it easy for people to deregister and then tear them down because they say there's nothing you can do with it. Well, if you use some imagination and you can raise the money and you can get some help from government to do so, then I think that this province would be well on the way to being a poster child for the type of place tourists want to come and see.

Then if we can also put some more money, Mr. Speaker, into our film and television industry and into the arts, then people would be able to see all this beauty on TV and film around the world and they would say, yes, that's where I want to go for my summer vacation - or Christmas or whatever. That's why it's called the creative economy, because it's very creative and it attracts much interest and many people.

With that, I'll say that our Party here does support the bill, but I would appreciate it if you would take a look at the pieces that I did talk about earlier. If you want to talk about that, or if the minister wants to talk about that with me alone, I'm happy to do so. Thank you very much.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings South.

MR. KEITH IRVING: I'm pleased to share a few words and thoughts on Bill No. 118. I spoke at second reading on this, and I will not repeat those remarks other than that the original bill was about streamlining the process, bringing the national standards and guidelines into effect as we deal with heritage and then, thirdly, strengthening the cultural

landscapes aspect of the bill. I'm very happy to hear that the two Opposition Parties will be supporting this bill.

As the member for Truro-Bible Hill-Millbrook-Salmon River mentioned, the minister and this government have listened to the input from concerned parties through amendments, including the Heritage Trust. I was delighted the minister was able to find some time to meet the Heritage Trust and invited me along to that meeting. We had a very productive discussion on finding the right balance for legislation and regulations with respect to the protection of our heritage.

That has resulted in two of the major issues being removed from the bill. That was, the original bill presented at first reading was eliminating clause 19B (1)(b). We have reconsidered that and are keeping that clause in there.

We've also removed the issue of undue hardship. Those were two areas that were particularly concerning to the Heritage Trust and I think they provide a compelling argument for us to delete those changes and strengthen the bill. So, we've been really working to find the right balance in terms of legislation and regulations, to find that balance to be both preserving and protecting registered properties, but also encouraging more people to register their properties.

In reviewing this bill and thinking about the interventions from the Heritage Trust and others, I decided to do a bit of research with respect to legislation throughout the province. That was actually very helpful for me in terms of understanding why we have Heritage Property Acts and its importance. There's a concept behind heritage that I think we should all keep in mind, both at the provincial level and at the municipal level. In a section on dereliction of designated heritage property, the Saskatchewan Heritage Act actually allows municipalities, when they see a building that's being ignored and perhaps falling apart that is of heritage status by the municipality - through that legislation, they can actually step in and repair the roof and take a financial interest in the land and actually charge interest in to the future.

What that really identified to me was that when someone is designating a property as heritage, or buying a heritage property, you are actually giving some of the public interest into that property. The public now has an interest and your rights are somewhat changed and I think that's extremely important to understand that those folks that have chosen to take on a heritage property, they are doing it as guardians for that property for time immemorial. These heritage properties will outlive any one owner. They are really just guardians for a period of time and the public has an interest and has a say in how those buildings are protected, used and altered.

That's why we have legislation provincially and municipalities have bylaws, which are empowered by this legislation, but in my research one thing that I found interesting is municipally we have our Heritage Property Act and our Provincial designations and we

have the associated programming and programming dollars to support those owners of the provincially designated properties.

We also have provincially a program to protect churches. They're municipally-designated heritage properties, but for churches specifically, there is a special program for that. When you look at municipal programs, all but five of our 51 or so municipalities have heritage bylaws, but only four have programs with associated dollars. I believe that that's something that we as legislators, as leaders in this province, perhaps need to highlight and reflect on and share with our municipal leaders how important it is for them not to just pass municipal heritage bylaw, but to have the associated programming to assist those owners who have taken on the responsibility to maintain those properties.

So, I just wanted to share that with folks, in terms of their discussions with all our municipal partners on the importance of heritage and importance of the taxpayer at the municipal level to partner programming dollars with their heritage bylaw.

With that I want to thank the minister for the improvements that he has made to this bill through this process to the Heritage Trust and others that have provided guidance and advice in improving the bill to make it better, and with that I'll take my seat, thank you Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The Acting Leader of the New Democratic Party.

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise in my place for a few minutes to speak on this bill. I wasn't going to, but as I listened to my colleagues I thought, I really feel like I would like to say a few things about this bill. I feel compelled to do that for a whole variety of reasons including the fact that I live in the beautiful Hydrostone District in the north end of Halifax which has a heritage designation as a district, and many of the individual hydrostone dwellings throughout the district are designated as Heritage Properties, but many aren't. This is a source of great pride to many of us.

Our neighbourhood was once voted as the Second Best Neighbourhood to Live in in Canada by the Canadian Urban Planning Association, the association of neighbourhood planners and, indeed, it is a fabulous neighbourhood. We've been speaking a lot about heritage as buildings and we think a lot about heritage as buildings, but we know that heritage is more than that. I understand that this bill, in addition to dealing with physical buildings, will have some implications for geographic areas that are of significance with respect to being designated and the kinds of development that goes on.

My colleague across the way who just spoke, I think, made a very interesting observation with respect to the public interest that exists with respect to the preservation of heritage designations, both property buildings and spaces. Of course, what we don't want

to do and I think we need to think about is how to ensure that when there is a public interest it's not off-loaded onto the private owner - and too often that is the case.

I think that is in a way the point that the member was making, that if there is a public interest in a heritage property, for example, but it's owned by somebody privately, the onus should not rest solely with that person to find the means to maintain that property. There is a public interest and therefore there needs to be consideration given to how we ensure that the public interest is, in fact, maintained in a tangible way. It's not really fair to an owner who doesn't have the means to maintain a heritage building to be left with all of the burden of doing that.

We're here in probably one of the most beautiful heritage properties in our province in many ways. I remember when I was first elected to this place, we had a member of our caucus, Mr. Peter Delefes, who no doubt maybe came to the Law Amendments Committee. He is a member of the Heritage Trust of Nova Scotia and has a lengthy interest in the whole field of heritage. I think in his first speech here in this Legislature, he went through the architecture of this place and pointed out where all of the little plaster icons that we see, where they originated and what they symbolized. It was amazing listening to him. He knew so much about the columns and various things, and the type of architecture that this building encompasses.

I think it is incumbent on us to have great consideration for how we preserve our historic places, especially - places that have meaning for our province. I think of the Women's Council House in the south end of Halifax, a very beautiful property. It is the property where women, the suffragists from our province, spent many, many evenings and afternoons talking about how to get women the vote in Nova Scotia. That building is still there, and it is still owned by a society that continues to maintain the property, and it is often used as a site for meetings in the women's community and beyond the women's community.

I look at heritage properties like that and I think how important they are. They are reminders of our history, and they are reminders of the people who did the heavy lifting to bring our province to where it is today.

Unfortunately, from time to time we see the loss of heritage properties. I represent the north end of Halifax, where St. George's Round Church had to be rebuilt after a fire a number of years ago. That beautiful church is one of the oldest churches - it's not the oldest church. I believe the oldest church is probably the little Dutch Church on Brunswick Street in the north end of Halifax. It is certainly the smallest church in the city, but it also has great historic meaning.

If you go around our province and our capital city here you will see the homes of Samuel Cunard and various people who worked in their time to develop our city. It would be such a loss to lose some of these important pieces of our heritage.

We have much in our province to be proud of and to protect. I'm pleased that the government did make some amendments to the bill that was brought in. No piece of legislation is perfect. There are probably a few more amendments that could have been made and we would have liked to have seen made. However, this is a piece of legislation that is very supportable, and the NDP caucus will be supporting this bill when it comes to a vote.

MR. SPEAKER: If I recognize the minister it will be to close the debate.

The honourable Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage.

HON. TONY INCE: Mr. Speaker, I now move that we close debate on Bill No. 118.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is for third reading of Bill No. 118. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

Ordered that this bill do pass. Ordered that the title be as read by the Clerk. Ordered that the bill be engrossed.

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 112.

Bill No. 112 - Children and Family Services Act.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Community Services.

HON. JOANNE BERNARD: Mr. Speaker, I rise to move Bill No. 12 - an Act to Amend Chapter 5 of the Acts of 1990, the Children and Family Services Act - be read a third time and do pass.

Mr. Speaker, I take the opportunity to say a few remarks about the journey of Bill No. 112 over the last - well, it's been a year now, a year today, actually. That was the first call that went out to the Aboriginal community in terms of consultation - December 8, 2014.

One of the things I'd really like to start with is to thank all the participants who over the months - particularly the summer months - came to many meetings with my staff who are here today, and talked about what their concerns were and what their hopes were for this bill, some pro, some against. We understand that everybody came from a place of wanting to protect children and support families; we understand that.

So we met with all of our child welfare staff, of course, from one end of the province to the other. I'd like to say something about the child welfare staff that we have in the Province of Nova Scotia. I've had the privilege of having two social workers work with me on their studies at Alice Housing over the years, who have gone on and now are child protection workers within the Province of Nova Scotia, and I can tell you that the professionalism, the compassion, the passion, and the commitment that these men and women have in the social work field, child protection, and the Department of Community Services is second to none.

I would also like to say that they work under very difficult situations. Their caseload is managed. We do have a standard of under 20, so I would like to clear up that misconception. But they walk into situations that I have witnessed many different times that are tragic, things that we can't imagine as members of this Chamber, unless you've actually worked on the ground with families that are in such crisis that the children are in danger. It is a very difficult job. It is a very difficult profession. I commend them every day for the professionalism that they show.

Starting first with our professionals who work in the department, we then went out into the wider community. We went out into the wider community after we presented the bill in the Spring sitting. It is the only piece of legislation that has been purposely and strategically staggered over two sessions because we knew that consultation was going to take place over the summer, and indeed it did.

We met with Mi'kmaw Family and Childrens Services. We met in Indian Brook and in Eskasoni. We met with family law practitioners. We met with the Assembly of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq Chiefs, family court judges, Nova Scotia Legal Aid, Dalhousie Legal Aid, Dalhousie Law School, Nova Scotia Barristers' Society, the Transition House Association of Nova Scotia, all the women's centres, the IWK Child Protection Team, the Department of Health and Wellness, the Association of Black Social Workers, men's intervention programs, the Ombudsman's Office, and community agencies such as Akoma Family Centre.

We've met with every youth outreach department and program in the province, every family resource centre. We met with sexual assault services, the Federation of Foster Families, the child welfare boards, policing services, residential programs, Nova Scotia Child and Youth Care Workers Association, the Department of Labour and Advanced Education, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, the Nova Scotia Association of Black Social Workers and other African Nova Scotian professionals, Alice Housing, the African Canadian parents of East Preston, and the Council of Nova Scotia University Presidents. This round of consultation, I must say, was piggybacked on the round of consultation that happened in 2012.

I first realized the ineffectiveness of this law back in 1999. During that time in 1999, I was the project developer for the Marguerite Centre. One of the directors of the board for

the Marguerite Centre was a foster parent and very involved with families in crisis in Nova Scotia. I asked her what she thought of the bill because I was seeing some things in my research for the Marguerite Centre that really disturbed me. She said quite clearly that we do a great job in Nova Scotia of breaking families up but we do a very poor job of keeping them together.

When I continued on with my research and talked to a child welfare specialist, I brought that quote to her, and I asked her why is it that in this province we're not better at protecting children and supporting families, because I was starting to see the consequences of addiction in the lives of children and certainly their mothers. The child welfare specialist simply said to me, because the legislation prevents me from doing that and intervening earlier to provide support.

So in 1999, nine years after the development of this legislation, we knew in the community that there were issues. We knew then. So if you go forward a few years and I arrive at Alice Housing, by this time I've read the Act and I'm starting to hear more rumblings in the community from people in community organizations who work with women, and this time I was working with women who were leaving domestic violence. Again, I asked, why does this legislation not better protect families and protect children so that services can be offered before we get to a state of crisis? Again, same answer - the legislation prevents it.

Now, people in the community were starting to take notice. Child welfare boards, foster parents, like Delores Feltmate and Cyril Reid, were all getting together saying we must do something. So there was a minister's advisory committee and I thought absolutely, this is going to happen. People are going to know that this legislation is preventing families from getting the support that they need and we are behind the eight ball on this. This was back in the mid-2000s. Fifteen years and eight reports later, nothing changed - nothing.

In 2012, I give credit to my predecessor who did another round of consultation, and she knows that this was the right thing to do because she worked in the department that helps families every day, and I, again in 2012 I thought this is it, we're going forth. Nothing happened. Nothing happened. I couldn't believe it. My son was born in 1990. That legislation was developed in 1990. It is absolutely unconscionable to me that the legislation that protected my son in 1990 is the same legislation that we have today, that would protect a grandchild if I had them. It's absolutely unconscionable - nothing to protect children further, in the world that we are in, different than in 1990.

So here we are, 2015, exactly a year to the day when the first call for consultations went out. One of the criticisms of this bill has been that it will result in more children coming into care, and I couldn't vehemently disagree more, because I have seen the lack of teeth that this legislation has had in not providing support for families. This government took that criticism and decided to do something about it in terms of Stronger Families NS, which was launched last Monday. We took 12 Parenting Journey sites and made them into

27, so that communities across this province had the coverage. We started Families Plus, which is an intensive family preservation pilot program which was launched in Sydney last week and there will be another launched in Halifax, and that is a comprehensive program with a very small caseload, 24/7 support for families who are at imminent risk of losing their children.

We are providing something that is called Family Connections, which is going to be enhanced training to every single community organization in this province who delivers Parenting Journeys. This is called Family Connections and will increase the training for these staff members to better support attachment relationships within families. These are \$1.2 million investments into a program that, quite simply, is second to none, has never happened before, the investment in keeping families together.

I guess my colleague from Cape Breton, Sydney River-Mira-Louisbourg said it best last week when he said that this isn't about parents, this isn't about lawyers, it's not about community workers or social workers - it is about children. I appreciate that articulation, I absolutely do because at the end of the day if you vote no on this bill, you are voting no against protecting children. It is not as crass or as simple as saying this is a child's rights bill or a parent's rights bill. We are supporting families sooner so that they do not get to a point of crisis where children are irreparably harmed and families cannot stay together; that is unconscionable.

In 1990, this Act was borrowed very greatly from the Acts of Ontario in 1990. In 2006 and 2010, the Government of Ontario overhauled their system and made these improvements that are in this legislation today - 2006 and 2010, we've done nothing. We are behind when it comes to language. We are behind when it comes to cultural connections. We are behind in meeting the needs of Aboriginal communities where 23 per cent of the children in care are. The words "Aboriginal" and "Mi kmaq" are non-existent in any thoughts of this legislation. There are now 32 amendments that directly affect Aboriginal families in this legislation.

Children between the ages of 16 to 19, we have all seen them slip through the cracks because on your 16th birthday, you're done. You get nothing from us. (Interruption) My colleague to my left is saying, you're done - he has lived it. This legislation makes sure that kids who want the support get it until they are 19 and they deserve to have that. There is no 16-year-old in this province that can be self-sufficient, take care of themselves, and be supported and protected. This legislation does that.

This legislation has come a long way. It started 15 years ago. It is trite and untrue to say there was no consultation; we've been having it for 15 years. We have eight reports from an advisory council that was set up by a minister long ago to help with suggestions on how we could better strengthen family support and child welfare legislation in this province and it has been ignored up until this date.

Mr. Speaker, with that I will sit. I look forward to the comments from my colleagues. I would also like to mention that in the regulatory process of this bill I have committed that consultation will continue, particularly in the Aboriginal community, and we will get to a space and a place in this legislation where we are better off than we are today without it. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

MR. JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to stand and say a few words about Bill No. 112. Before I begin to get into the bill, I just want to respond to the comments from the minister and say that I do respect the minister's integrity in her comments and I know that while we may disagree in some of the wording of the bill, that I do respect her commitment to children and having the best outcome for children in Nova Scotia. I think that is obviously true for all members of the House, but in making the few comments that I will make about certain issues in the bill, I do want to acknowledge that I do believe the minister has the best interests of children at heart. I hope the comments that I make will reflect that conviction too, even if we are disagreeing a little bit about some of the details of the bill.

Certainly, we've seen a significant push back to the bill from certain communities in the province and maybe even seen some regional disparity in how the bill was viewed. One of the things coming out of Kings County was some comments that were made publicly by a person I know very well, about the very high caseload of Family and Children's Services workers and I do want to address the minister's comments about that caseload.

I do want to say I have a great deal of respect for anybody who is working in Family and Children's Services and recognize the extraordinary difficult and heart-wrenching situations that they would have to face. I realize it can't be easy to deal with those situations and I know it must wear on the people who do that, and I do recognize that it's probably a job which is very difficult, when you go home at night, to really stop thinking about, so in a sense, it becomes a 24/7 job.

I do have a friend who has been in that type of work - not specifically in children and family services - for a long time, and I said to him, how do you do that? He said, well, when I drive by this certain spot on my way home, I park everything back home. He managed to last in it a long time, but it is extremely difficult to do this type of work.

One of the issues we have coming out of Kings County is the comment that was made in *The Chronicle Herald* from Debbie Reimer, that the caseload was 30 to 40 people. I know the recommendation is that the caseload for children and family services staff workers be 20 cases and that they be low-, medium-, and high-risk cases. Where does this discrepancy come from? I've asked this question - and I don't dispute the minister's

number either and the explanation, but I would like to hear the minister comment to the explanation on the discrepancy.

What I've heard is that when they take the total number of cases and the total number of workers in children and family services, the math does work out, but not every worker in children and family services actually carries a caseload. Some are support staff and some are other types of workers. The actual person right on the front line is carrying those high - that's what I've been told, and I would appreciate the minister - I know she'll have opportunity at some point to make closing comments, and I would appreciate hearing the answer to that discrepancy, because we do know that in Kings County in some cases there are very high caseloads and individual workers are carrying these. So there is a discrepancy in the caseloads being carried. This is an issue.

I do want to comment on the very positive change in the bill to go from 16 years to 19 years of age. We see that as a very significant, positive improvement in the bill. Some of the other language of the bill - to go to collaborative, restorative justice-type things is also a very positive comment in the bill.

One of the issues that has come out of Kings County, in particular for me and some of the people that I talk to, is the question of the definitions of neglect and abuse, and the feeling that they were becoming too broad - the sense that the definitions that were there were better. That certainly has been a very interesting debate.

If we look at the legislation - and in fact, I have most, if not all, of the other provinces' definitions of abuse and harm right here with me. It is an interesting read, and one that I really didn't have time - I just actually acquired that information this morning, to really go through. I think we will have one of the most succinct, and for its brevity, definitions of abuse and harm of any province in the country.

We see in other provinces more detail in some of those definitions. For instance, in New Brunswick, if a child is not attending school, that can be a cause for - that's a type of situation which may cause intervention. Presumably in Nova Scotia, with the catch-all phrase in the definition now, or any similar Acts, in both cases, maybe some of these things are covered.

One of the other things I noticed in reading some of the other provinces' definitions is that in the definitions there are specific references to drug and alcohol abuse. We realize that is a big issue in why many families in Nova Scotia get into trouble with managing their children or keeping the family integrity together - drug and alcohol abuse. I know there's possibly a discrepancy between what is available in the city and in rural Nova Scotia, but in some cases there can be significant wait times in rural Nova Scotia to get some of the services that are required to address some of these issues of abuse.

I know that is something that has been debated throughout the discussion about the bill - the timelines and how much time was available for families to take action to address some of the situations. I know that it did receive, as the bill went on, some adjustment to it, and I do appreciate the fact that there were amendments to that, but one of the issues being that in rural Nova Scotia some of these services are very lacking in some cases. In some cases in Kings County, reportedly to get mental health help it's a two and a half month wait - these types of things and it sort of eats into the total amount of time available to address some of these situations. So that's of concern to us.

I know that the bill has in it a section, not in the amendments, but in the original bill, about the activities of the minister and the minister shall provide, it says there are a number of things that that says, and certainly I know that the department and the staff do attempt to provide those, but in some cases they can be very difficult to address too. So there are many issues here for families in Nova Scotia and the intent, I think of all of us, is to have the circumstance for families in Nova Scotia to be better.

One of the debates has been that the amount of input from the public, and I do recognize that in the initial phases of this bill - and I do want to commend the minister for that, for bringing the bill in the last session and having quite a significant amount of time for input, but there was a sense in the waning days of this session now, that there has been in the end of November, the last couple weeks of November to now, that there has been the desire for more public input.

One of the issues was that of course there's this long-standing tradition at Law Amendments Committee that the public only gets an opportunity to have input into the bill, yet the bill did receive some amendments as this was going on and maybe it was starting to attract more press. There were more people who wanted to come and present to Law Amendments Canada - and I think that is something in a bill of this significance and importance that possibly we should have looked at, to have the Law Amendments Committee again go back at addressing that.

I don't think we've asked that for any other bill and certainly it's four more hours of your life. I think that it could be done and, anyway - so one of the things, and I do recognize one of the issues with the bill was the striking out of Section 88, which was the committee to review the bill and I know, I've said before in the House that I understand that that committee really wasn't meeting in the last number of years, in any case the minister has brought in another version of that and it's going to be reviewed every four years.

I do respect her commitment to seeing this reviewed as time goes on. So, in a sense, we lost something in the bill that wasn't being done, but I do think that this review will be necessary for this Act and certainly the ongoing challenges of the children and family services department and the interaction it has with the citizens of Nova Scotia and those who are at - certainly the department is interacting with Nova Scotians who are at some of

their most vulnerable points in their life, when they're the most stressed, and I do recognize that.

I do want to say that I appreciate the extension on the cumulative limit being extended in the amendments and I know there were some who said that they wanted that extended more, but the cumulative limit extension is probably a positive extension, but this is something and we know that when there are issues of drug abuse and alcohol abuse interacting with everyday lives, it's very difficult sometimes to escape those addictions in one try. Sometimes there are relapses and then they start again, and I don't think it's very common for someone, even with professional help, to escape the addiction of a drug or an alcohol abuse in one effort. Normally there are, much like smoking probably, a number of efforts before these things will be escaped.

One of the things that has been said is there's a concern that out of this bill and certainly even from the point of view of just raising the age limit from 16 to 19, there will be more demand on children and family services, and possibly more children going into permanent care. It will take more money to provide those services; that's for sure. We see that one of the issues is - is the department going to get the resources necessary to do that?

We see a department - certainly from our point of view in Kings County - that is operating, possibly, without adequate resources now, if in fact my caseload suggestion is accurate. Coming from the person that it's coming from out of Kings County, I really don't doubt that those things are accurate.

I do believe that in the future, and because of this bill possibly, we will see more children in permanent care. One of the things that I have before me here is a statistic that there has been a decrease in the number of foster homes in the province by 22 per cent since 2008 and also, the average age of a foster parent is over 60; now 23 per cent of foster parents are over 60 years of age. I know there are probably some new younger foster parents coming into the system, but as the number of foster parents decreases and their age increases, there's going to be increased demand on these foster parent families. This will be an issue. Apparently right now there are 750 children in foster homes in the province.

There is a belief, and I know the minister would agree, that ultimately the best outcome would be for children and families to stay together and for the province, through family and children's services and the various types of services that can be provided - counselling and mental health services and medical services - the goal of everybody would be to keep families together. When families are torn apart, certainly it is very difficult for the children too. That is, in itself, a stress on the children. On the other hand, we realize that unfortunately this is necessary, that we have to deal with this as a society and that in a certain number of cases, obviously, parents should not keep children.

As I mentioned in the beginning, we have at the very point these staff at children and family services making that decision, which is a truly difficult situation to be dealing

with. This is something that I can see would be an extraordinarily difficult circumstance, to make this decision. On the one hand we do want to provide the services and all of the necessary things to have families thrive and succeed; on the other hand we recognize the necessity of certain circumstances, when these children have to be taken out of these homes - there's no doubt about that. We realize that this sort of dilemma falls on the shoulders of the Minister of the Department of Community Services, and family and children's services staff.

Some of the issue with the definitions is the idea that more broad definitions would allow for more time to be taken in court. I don't really know the answer to that. That's what people have said to me; they feel that way. I don't know whether that's really true or not. I know that what I think I heard the minister saying was that more broad definitions of harm and neglect and abuse would allow family and children's services to intervene earlier. I can understand that argument.

On the other hand, the people who were speaking to me were feeling that in the department there was a sense that there were already broad and sweeping powers within family and children's services. I hear the minister saying that in her opinion these definitions weren't broad enough.

I recognize that as a tension within the document and within the debate. I'm not sure that I really know the answer to that either. I recognize that's where the heart of this whole thing is.

I do recognize that the minister has said that she did have consultation with many, many communities. I know that in the waning days of the debate, I think on November 27th, we did receive one message from an African Nova Scotian association that they wanted to get into Law Amendments Committee and were not able to because it had already gone by. I do recognize that this bill was before the public for not quite a year but certainly close to eight or nine or 10 months. That being said, I realize that the bill is - and I've had a lot of input - a lot of concerns about Children and Family Services, how it functions and the dilemmas that it faces, and the sense that it needs to be improved. I realize that while there are issues within the bill, there are positive changes within the bill too. I don't think that anyone on any side of this House has anything but absolute concern for the children and to see that this is done right. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Acting Leader of the New Democratic Party.

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to have an opportunity to rise in my place and talk to Bill No. 112, the Children and Family Services Act. I speak tonight as someone who comes from the social work profession, and I want to start by saying, much like my colleague who just spoke in front of me said to the minister, that we recognize that the minister and her government - probably the minister particularly, given her background - have a very keen and strong interest in protecting children. We

recognize that, and we would like to say to the minister that she's not the only one who has that strong and keen interest in protecting children.

This legislation needs to be about children, and it needs to be what is in the best interest of children. The history of child welfare is one that is contested, I would say, in terms of what is in the interest of children, just like what a "child" is is contested. Some of us here are old enough to have been raised in a time when children were to be seen and not heard. There was a time when children were no different than adults: they went to work, they worked in mines, they worked in factories. The society of the day, at that time, did not recognize that childhood even existed.

The whole concept of being a child only came into being around the turn of the century. There are a lot of really interesting social historians who have written about the history of childhood and how we have come to evolve as a people, as a society, in how we look at children and how we define what is in the best interests of children, what is the kind of care that a child needs.

Things have changed a lot just in the last 20 years. We have a professor of social work at Dalhousie, Dr. Michael Ungar, who does a lot of research around the resilience of children. How is it that children, in the most horrendous circumstances, can thrive in spite of the fact that they are in horrendous circumstances, in circumstances where they live on the street, in circumstances where they are in war-torn situations?

There's a body of knowledge that is constantly changing and shifting about children, how we relate to them as a society. I think without any question, Mr. Speaker, everybody here in this House recognizes that what children need is a loving family. Children do best in a loving family, in a loving family where there is the capacity to meet the child's needs - their physical needs, their emotional needs, their social needs - and not everybody has those capacities.

The people who are on the front lines of intervening when children are at risk of harm are social workers and child protection workers. The minister hit it on the head when she said it's not an easy job. It's a tough job. We owe some debt of gratitude, for sure, to people who put themselves in those roles.

I have never been a social work-child protection worker but when I was a very new social worker and I worked in a legal aid office, I remember very well one afternoon one of the senior lawyers in that office, a woman whose name is Sarah MacKenzie - she has passed away but Sarah MacKenzie is on the wall over at Dalhousie Law School as being recognized for the selfless service she gave to not just the practice of law but to her clients and her students who she taught at the clinic. A wonderful woman, Sarah went to law school after having taught in elementary school for many years. Sometimes at the clinic when Sarah would be talking to the law students, you would almost think she had a Grade 3 class in front of her rather than a class of law students.

She came into my office and said to me, Maureen, can you come with me? I need somebody to come with me out to Spryfield. She told me that she had a call from one of the housing authority workers - it was at the time the Halifax Housing Authority, before they amalgamated - she said can you come with me out to the office of the Halifax Housing Authority, I've just had a call from there and they are very upset. The police are going to meet us at the office. A young child had come to the office with a note and she had given it to the worker in the housing office. The note said that her mother - her mother had written the note and told her to take this to the housing office - the note said that her mother was being held in her home by her ex-husband, who had just gotten out of Dorchester Penitentiary, and he had weapons and he was holding the family in the house.

The mom had been able to talk him into allowing that child to go to school. The little girl was no more than eight or nine and she gave her a note and told her to take it to the housing office. The note said, call Sarah MacKenzie at Dalhousie Legal Aid, my lawyer.

We went out - I went with Sarah, I'll never forget this, I was in my early 20s, I was a pretty inexperienced social worker. We went out to the housing office and we met the police officers. The housing person told us a little bit about what she knew about the family. We went over with the police officers to the home. I'll never forget to this day walking into that place with the officers, how terrifying it was and the father of those children had weapons, he had guns on the kitchen table. They were right there.

He answered the door - those were back in the days when police officers didn't have a lot of protocols around how to respond to domestic disputes. You know, I think Bryony House at that time was the transition house here in Halifax - it would have only been a year or two old, if that. This was back in the 1980s and I think Bryony House opened in maybe 1978/79. And when we went to the home I remember the police officer saying to Sarah, you go first, and how terrified we both were. The man answered the door, and he saw the police officers and Sarah and I, of course he wouldn't have any idea who we were and the police officers kind of took him off to the side and spoke with him and we went and got the lady, she had one other little girl, preschool. We threw pajamas and sneakers in a bag and we got out of there with her as fast as we could and we went to the transition house.

You know, child protection workers are in those situations and it can be very tough. So, it's not an easy job. There are lots of times you have to make judgment calls and you have to make them without a lot of - you know, you second guess yourself I guess I would say, because sometimes it's very clear, but sometimes it's not so clear.

When I look at this bill, Bill No. 112 for example, with that particular story and that particular family, you know the transition houses were here at Law Amendments Committee. They came to talk about their concerns. There's an onus now in this legislation with respect to a mum like that, a mum in that situation and in terms of her responsibility

to report if there's any possibility that her children could be at risk, notwithstanding the fact that she herself might be at risk, or she herself might be terrified. So, I think for myself, when I look at this bill, this is probably one of the most serious and significant pieces of legislation that our House of Assembly could ever possibly debate and pass.

So, I don't think it's fair or it's terribly helpful, to be frank, for the minister to say that anybody who votes against this bill is voting against protecting children. That's a totally unfair thing to say; it's a terrible thing to say. It's kind of the thing I would expect Stephen Harper's Government to say, but it's not the kind of thing that I would expect this government to say.

There are things about this bill, Mr. Speaker, that I like, that are very supportable, that are laudable, so let's start with the positives around this bill. This bill I think, particularly the provisions that will extend the age of intervention, if you will, in the department from 16 years to 18 years, I think is a very laudable provision in this bill, and it's very supportable. However, it's only as good as the resources that get put in to back up this bill.

I want to say I didn't just fall off the turnip truck in terms of how child welfare has been resourced with adolescents in the province. I have another example from my time as an MLA - I have many, actually. One afternoon I was contacted by a psychiatrist at the IWK to talk about a young guy, he was 15, who essentially was sleeping on the railroad tracks, so well within the existing Act, 15 years old. He had been a ward of - well no, actually that's not accurate - he had been a child in care since he had been an infant, voluntary care. He had never been apprehended and had never gone through a formal court process.

When the child was young he had suffered a brain injury at birth and had a lot of difficulties throughout his life. His needs were more than his mom could manage, or his grandmother. His mother was a single mom. I don't know how many foster homes he had been in. The doctor told me it was maybe 17 foster homes. He got to be quite a big lad, so when he became physically very large and strong, but intellectually with the capabilities of still a young child, he became thoroughly unmanageable for the foster care system. The supports weren't there in the foster care system.

Eventually at 15 he ended up in the secure treatment unit in Truro, which is a 30-day assessment program. It is not a program where you get treatment; it's where you get assessed. He and some other young person at the centre in Truro had gone on some kind of a rampage. They had beaten up a couple of staff and stole car keys, got a car and took off. Eventually, when they were found and returned to the authorities, the child welfare system - he was like five months away from turning 16 - the decision was made to terminate him, to terminate the relationship between the government, the state, because that's who had been his caregivers and takers for a long time, overseeing his care.

So at 15 his care was terminated and he was sitting in the waiting room at what at the time was the Children's Aid Society here in Halifax; it still existed. His mother and grandmother were called and told to come and pick him up, that his care was being terminated.

I'm not under any illusion that extending the legislation from 16 to 18 years old is going to result in some big transformation in the system. I would like to see better levels of care for 16-to-18 years but I know of too many circumstances like that young man where when the care gets to be too great, in the eyes of the Department of Community Services, their care is terminated - and I'm not the only one who has had this experience.

I think we have to be cautious. I think we have to be cautious with respect to the hope or the promise that we're holding out about what these changes might actually mean even on the more positive side of the equation. As I said, I would like nothing better than to see better services and better supports for children in care or adolescents in care at that higher age level. But it's going to require investment and the resources that will allow this expansion with this age group. And if anybody thinks that it isn't, then they're dreaming in Technicolor. It will, and we'll be watching for that. We will be watching for that; we will insist on it.

That's kind of the big hope in this bill, the expansion of the age or the extension of the age, from my perspective. I have to say that I have a lot of concerns and reservations on the other side of the equation with respect to the new powers and the extended powers that the government is giving themselves with respect to the care of children. The Act from the 1990s was predicated on the notion that the first thing for government to do was to attempt to keep families whole and also to have respect for things like the cultural background of children. Children who came from, let's say, an African Nova Scotian family, consideration of the ethnic background of the child would be given if the child eventually came into permanent care. This bill doesn't address that. This bill seems to be going in a somewhat different direction. There is no mention - there's an absence of any discussions with respect to the background of the child. (Interruption)

I think - the minister is yelling at me across the floor. I'm merely repeating, Mr. Speaker (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. The honourable Acting Leader of the New Democratic Party has the floor.

MS. MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I, like the previous speaker, was only making reference to correspondence that we've had from people in the African Nova Scotia community who have expressed these concerns. They are valid concerns and the fact that we're giving voice to them here is not a reason to ridicule and shout people down. (Interruptions)

I see the hour is getting late. I have quite a bit more to say on this bill, if I'm able to speak without being intimidated by members of the other side. (Interruptions) I believe "intimidated" is a parliamentary term. I've had a chance to look at (Interruptions) Thank you.

As I was saying, this legislation is really important. It's important to all of us who are concerned about protecting children. I was attempting to say that there is a philosophical shift in this bill from the bill of the 1990s, which will have some practical results that will make a difference.

The minister has talked about early intervention and being able to intervene earlier. The concern that has been expressed to me is that not only will there be earlier intervention but there will be earlier apprehension. The opportunities that families have now, to be able to address any deficiencies that they have with respect to their ability to function as a fully functioning family, will be cut very short by these new provisions. Plus there are very good possibilities that changing the definitions will allow many more children to come into the care of the province. We already have 750 kids in foster care in Nova Scotia. That's a significant number.

Mr. Speaker, I'm being told that perhaps I should adjourn debate until a later date, so I would make that motion.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is to adjourn debate. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, that concludes the government's business for today. The House will sit tomorrow from the hours of 11:00 a.m. until 1:30 p.m.

It being the Opposition business of the New Democratic Party caucus, I would ask their House Leader to give us the business for tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable House Leader for the New Democratic Party.

HON. DAVID WILSON: We'll be calling Bill No. 146, the bill that we tabled today, for debate tomorrow. I ask that we do rise to meet again at 11:00 a.m. tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, I can also advise that Public Accounts Committee will be meeting tomorrow from 8:45 a.m. until 10:30 a.m. As well, Question

Period, which is usually one hour after the start of the House, will be amended tomorrow so that Question Period will start at 11:30 a.m., with the House starting at 11:00 a.m. Just so everyone is aware.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now rise to meet again from 11:00 a.m. until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is that the House now rise to meet again tomorrow between the hours of 11:00 a.m. and 1:30 p.m.

Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

We now stand adjourned until tomorrow at 11:00 a.m.

[The House rose at 5:59 p.m.]

[Notices of Motion under Rule 32(3) will follow when they are complete.]